

Robert Clive, first Baron Clive of Plassey (1725-74), from the portrait by Nathaniel Dance in the National Portrait Gallery.

CLIVE OF INDIA



R. J. MINNEY

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JARROLD'S • LONDON

FOUNDED IN 1770



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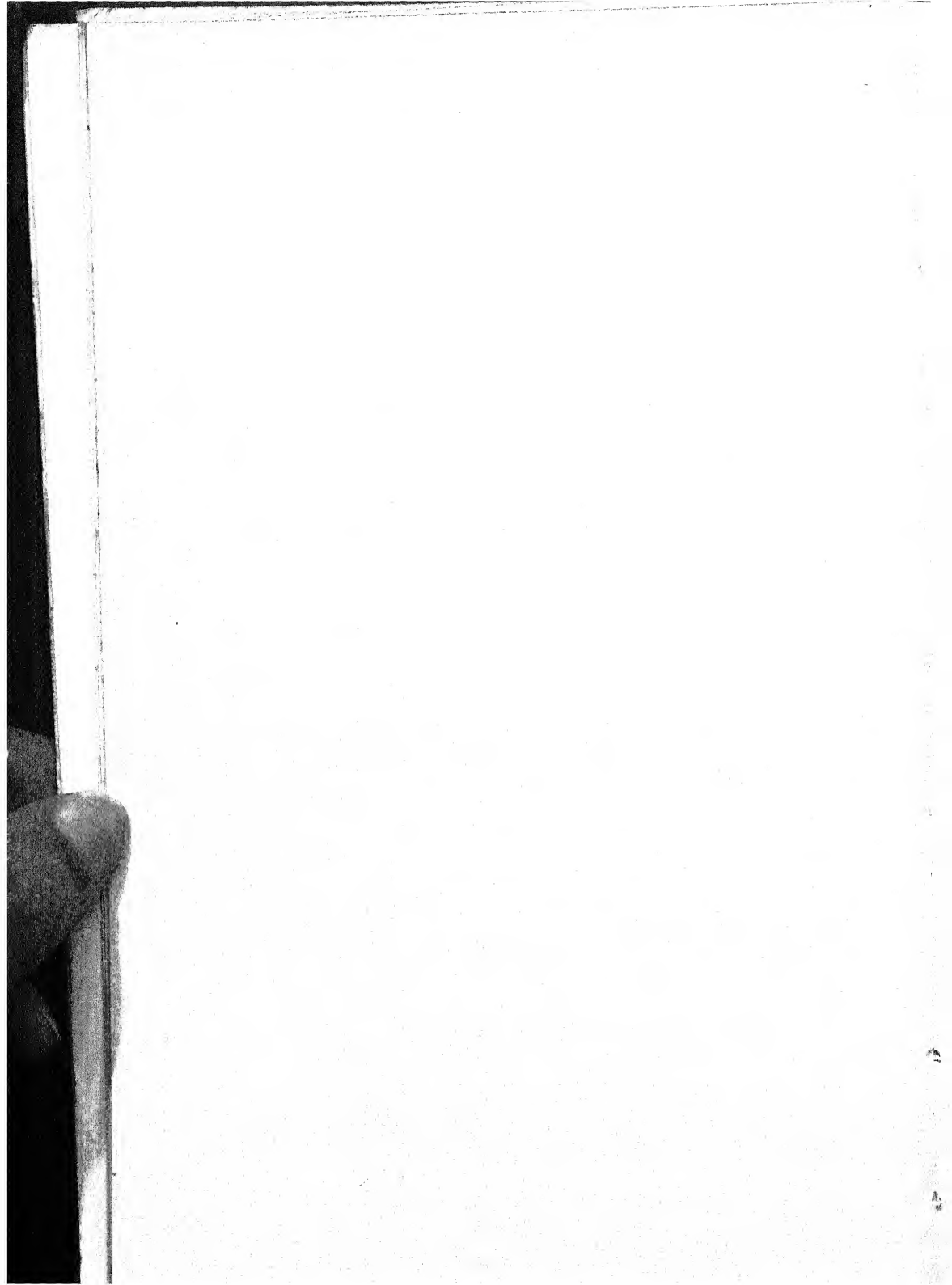
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M/s Lakshmi Bank Store, New Delhi on 11/12/52

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It is a quarter of a century since this biography of Clive was first published. Its cordial reception by both Press and public and its adaptation for the stage and screen (in which W. P. Lipscomb collaborated) kept it in almost continuous demand and have now encouraged the publishers to replace the unillustrated popular edition by one that is better set out and amply illustrated by the reproduction of contemporary pictures and maps.

My purpose before it went to press was to extend the book, should it be necessary, by incorporating such discoveries about Clive as might have been made since this book first appeared. But the only two biographies of Clive to follow mine came out soon after it, and I have found nothing in them that was not known before. Indeed I had myself to rely largely on the research of those who had gone before and was able in the main to introduce only two new gleams of light—Clive's romantic courtship of Margaret Maskelyne after seeing a lovely miniature of her on her brother Edmund's desk, and the refutation of the generally accepted belief that Clive committed suicide. I could find no proof of suicide. It was variously asserted that Clive had cut his throat, that he had shot himself, and that he had taken poison. All I could find was that he had taken an overdose of opium, whether by accident or design could not be established since he often took opium to relieve the acute internal pains from which he suffered.

I have also read through a number of books on India written by Indian authors in the last few years. Of Clive they tell us nothing that was not known. They differ greatly in their opinion of his conduct. Some very naturally are condemnatory, others state, with commendable frankness, that in his actions, and especially in his intrigues and deceptions, he kept closely to the practice in India at that time; and they quote by way of illustration parallel examples from Moghul history when ethical considerations were not allowed to fetter the needs of diplomacy. So there was nothing for me to add; and, save for the smoothing out of a phrase here and there and, in view of India's altered status, certain adjustments to the past tense where a continuity of conditions was implied, the book remains as it first appeared.

It is essentially the story of a man who was imbued with immense courage and was fired by the spirit of adventure to carve out of the rivalries and intrigues of the time a vast empire, which came in the first instance under the control of a trading corporation. He foresaw that it could not remain so. But it was Warren Hastings, his subordinate and his eventual successor, who realized that India would one day rule herself again.

R. J. M.

CHAPTER I

The Ungovernable Child

I

It was Christmas Day. The child's eyes were bright. Their vivid brown blazed through a fevered mist at the dancing shadows thrown upon the ceiling by the passing traffic: the shadows of carts, horses and passers-by.

The itinerant cries of Manchester, the rumble and stress of an active, growing city framed the hushed listlessness that tip-toed about the silent room. Slowly the hour of crisis crept nearer. But few of the grave heads that nodded solemnly outside the curtained door dared hope for a satisfactory issue. The life of a little child, mischievous, headstrong, but loved, ebbed gently away.

The world was unaware and unconcerned. In London George the Second, who had been but a year on the throne, was bumping his gross figure up and down Rotten Row on a large ungainly horse. In France the eighteen-year-old Louis the Fifteenth, who had a twelve-month before announced his resolve to rule in person, sat limply in a chair of gold and rich brocade while lackeys draped silks and satins about his slight, effeminate form, preparatory to mass. In India Muhammad Shah, latest of the jack-in-the-boxing successors of the Grand Moghuls, indulged in pompous pageantry with belled and bejewelled elephants, to blind the multitudes to his attenuated power. Not one of these knew of the dying child in a little railed cot in his uncle's Manchester home; nor, knowing of him, would they have spared an instant's anxiety for his welfare. He was no more to them than any of the forty-seven per cent of children who at that time died before attaining the age of five.

But the crisis passed, this child aged three, his name Robert Clive, lived to alter, when his youth had barely turned to manhood, the destinies of all three monarchs and their successors.

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Full in the face he had gazed at death and won; and at no time thereafter was Clive afraid of confronting it again. Repeatedly he

challenged and defied death. Twice he invited it. He was always eager to leap upon that unstable threshold of the hereafter before which so many cower in hesitant timidity. Perhaps it was this Christmas crisis that infused a potent charge of recklessness into that assertive dominance which the child had inherited from his intolerant father, producing a blend of daring and tenacity that burnt their impress upon the mould of history.

The wan sunlight of a winter's dawn trickled into the sick room through the curtain crevices three mornings after Christmas. Its pale gold was chilled but joyous. In the cot a lean, emaciated infant form was standing on short legs and, with hands clutched on rails, was rousing the household with a fearful clatter. The finger-raised caution of a nurse at the door was unheeded. In alarm the dressing-gowned, bespectacled impatience of Uncle Daniel entered the room, followed by the far more distraught feminine figure of Aunt Bay. They had feared that the crisis had returned, for minds that have been denied slumber by nursing, are a prey to fears when rudely aroused from a deferred repose. But the obstreperous vigour of the child, while it reassured them, brought annoyance into both pairs of ageing eyes. They had hastened on a needless summons, when, but for this irrepressible exuberance of a child whom father and mother had failed to discipline, they might have been repairing in slumber some of the havoc that anxiety had wrought upon their nerves.

On the small ancestral estate of Styche, near Market Drayton, in Shropshire, where Clive was born on the 29th of September, 1725, the abundant family of six sons and seven daughters had not yet arrived to make the departure of the eldest an economic advantage. Robert was barely two and a half when he was despatched by a doting mother to her sister's home in Manchester, Hope Hall, away from the irascible storming of a gouty father, from whom he had derived more in heredity than it appeared good for environment to augment. The Bayleys were a tender, tolerant, childless pair and it was hoped that they would succeed in superimposing upon the infantile turbulence such gentler qualities as might make the child more fitted for sociability than his father seemed. Their work was barely begun when the boy, as if in rebellion, crawled away from their correction in a declining fever to the edge of the grave; and thus won with recovery a greater measure of indulgence than could be hoped for even in his own home.

After that first spasm of annoyance at disturbed slumber, Uncle Dan and Aunt Bay learnt to appreciate every impatience, every

outburst of anger, every act of mischief as a new sign of returning health. He did with his guardians as he pleased, made them bend to his more dominant will. The mature pair were forced into all manner of childish antics for his amusement. For hours the grave yet kindly uncle sat by the cot, endeavouring to conduct from there so much of his business and his correspondence as the child would allow. Writing to Styche, the uncle exulted at the boy's increasing ill temper, "which we take as a good omen of his mending. I am writing this," he explained, "close to his bedside, and he is crying with the greatest impatience for me to lie on the bed with him; nor will he be quiet one moment, with all the fine words I can give him, which now makes me conclude abruptly."

Within a month his hold upon the home was so complete that neither uncle nor aunt dared leave the premises without his consent. "With reluctance," the uncle confided to a friend, "Bob this afternoon suffered his Aunt Bay to go to chapel."

Four years of such unremitting dominance, despite all efforts at gentle, and eventually firm, persuasion, confirmed Clive at the immature age of seven in a "fierceness and imperiousness" that made him "fly out at every trifling occasion. For this reason," wailed the helpless uncle, "I do what I can to suppress the heroic, that I may help forward the more valuable qualities of meekness, benevolence and patience."

From time to time bribes were administered. Little Bob was tricked out in a new suit of clothes to gratify a childish vanity and he promised by his reformation to deserve the award. But the reform was short-lived. An hour or two later a new fit of rage stirred his fists, ever eager for battle, and the little boy was rolling the new suit in the mud in a rough and tumble encounter with an equally small guest who had been invited to divert the afternoon with some gentle game.

The child had the will to win, a resolve that would countenance no obstacle. That correction failed him in the impressionable years redounded to the advantage of Britain. A neglected rod altered the history of three nations.

From the edge of the hill the staid old Gothic church of Market Drayton raises a minatory finger to the sky. It is a lofty tower that strains the craned neck of the beholder and brings a giddiness to the

imagination of the nerveless. Some distance below the summit and difficult of access from it, a gargoyle juts a dragon head through which the rain-water spouts to the delight of school-children.

Below the shadow flung from it by the morning sun excited crowds have gathered, their eyes turned upwards. A few have their arms raised, their fingers pointing. One woman has fainted, but the others are too excited to give her much attention. Little girls clutch each other's hands in the tenseness of agonized suspense. Schoolboys gape with open-mouthed terror and envy. A schoolmaster from Market Drayton school wears a troubled scowl upon his brow. He is wondering whether he will have to use the cane of correction or the penitent mien of a mourner at a funeral.

They are all gazing at the dragon-head spout which seems suddenly to have come alive. There is a stirring of shadows, small shadows, only just visible with the naked eye. A stone gets dislodged and crashes to the earth. The spout seems to rise; no, it is a slight form that has risen above it and is standing with a dauntless insecurity upon the dragon head. There is a further scream from below. Of course, they had learned to expect anything from that daredevil son of Mr. Richard Clive, the irascible lawyer, whom they often saw sitting in an uncomfortable pew in that ugly church. But they wish he could be fetched now from his estate at Styche, so that, seeing some of these pranks, he might administer adequate correction on the boy. With bated breath they watch the small, stirring shadow; and at length, his object achieved, the smooth stone he sought clutched securely in his little, torn hand, the boy scrambles laughingly back across the wall of the tower, over the castellated top, and down at last into the midst of the alarmed spectators. Clive had been playing a game of 'Ducks and Drakes' with some boys by the River Tern just behind the church; and his resolve to win was so great that he had braved every peril to secure an astonishingly smooth stone he had once seen from the turret top in the mouth of a church gargoyle—a stone that could outstrip the rest in skimming the water.

It had been foreseen, of course, that a child so impetuous, so spirited, and so intractable to discipline would prove an embarrassment to any schoolmaster. But the actuality surpassed these expectations, for Clive had to be sent from school to school to save the other boys from contamination. Already he had been removed from the school at Lostock in Cheshire, to which his Uncle Dan had sent him. Before he was despatched from the school nearer his own home, at Market

Drayton, he was engaged in far more exasperating exploits. The entire town was soon up in arms against him. The tradesmen, the distressed parents of other children waited upon his headmaster and besought the removal of young Clive; for he had drilled a predatory band of urchins, armed with stones, and had marched them audaciously upon the shops, threatening the destruction of windows should the sought levy of apples and ha'pence be denied. Following a dispute with the least amenable of the traders, Clive lay in the gutter outside, and, his small body acting as a dam, flooded the store of the offender with the foul water.

The boy was removed—at first to Merchant Taylors' School in London and thence to a private school in Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire. His young brain betrayed a ready inventiveness in strategy; he displayed a fearlessness and daring that made one at least of his schoolmasters prophesy that if he lived to attain manhood, which because of his very foolhardiness seemed doubtful, Clive would inscribe across the pages of history a name than which there would be few greater. But there was in him at no time a disposition for learning. The boy made progress in mischief, but none in scholarship; and in despair the angry father, despite the entreaties of a doting mother, despatched the boy at the age of seventeen to India, to die there of a fever for all it mattered.

CHAPTER II

Destiny

I

THE voyage out was as full of thrill as the adventurous heart of Clive could desire. It took fifteen months to reach a destination that is now reached by sea in little more than fifteen days. The East India sailing ships, pride of the British mercantile marine and envy of the world, were built more for security than speed or comfort. It was always in doubt whether they would reach their destinations at all; for in addition to the stress of storms, which tore away masts and rudder, they had to face the depredations of buccaneers, Drake-like robbers who lay in wait for the prizes in their bulging hulks—the mirrors and watches and other Western novelties taken to fascinate the throngs in the bazaars, or, on the homeward journey, the diamonds, rubies, pearls, silks and rich brocades that for three hundred years had lured the nations of the West to an emulous quest for speedier eastward routes, a quest that had led to the discovery of America, which to his death Columbus regarded as a part of India.

The route Clive was taking had been followed for two hundred and fifty years, first by the Portuguese, and then, when their closely preserved secret had been wrested from them, by the Dutch, the English, and the French. Across that wide span of centuries, the nations had warred on each other's ships, even when the countries remained at peace. But just before Clive's sailing, the covetousness of European rulers had set them at each other's throats in a war around the Austrian succession. So to the tribulations of a normal voyage were added now the war-blest depredations of the French.

Clive had not been many days at sea when an accompanying ship, within sight of security, ran upon some rocks and foundered. All on board perished. Not a mast was left standing, and the seas swept over the decks as if to wipe clean the stain of tragedy. Barely a month later, before this thrill had dimmed, Clive was roused from a deep sleep at three in the morning, by cries of panic. His ship too had run aground. It had been blown by a stiff wind right across the Atlantic and on to a submerged lip of Brazil, just north of Pernambuco. In the excitement and confusion Clive lost most of his possessions and was constrained to

borrow clothes and wigs from his fellow passengers and money from the captain, an avaricious wretch who charged an exorbitant rate of interest which he did not live to receive. A few days later, the pent-up restlessness of seventeen-year-old Clive provided itself with an outlet; he fell overboard. In narrating this, with due apologies and excuses to his impatient father, Clive confessed that it had "nigh cost me my life, having tumbld overboard whilst I was standing on the Po ofop the Ship as she was lying at an Anchor on the Coast of Brasil, and should certainly have been drowned, there being a very great Sea and much Wind, if the Captain had not Accidentally met with a Bucket and a Rope tied unto it, which he threw out of the Balcony to me, I having the good fortune to lay hold of it; I then lost my Shoes off my Feet, and with them my Silver Buckles, also a Hat and Wigg."¹

For nine months, for the ship was badly battered and had to be repaired, the passengers lived ashore in Brazil, fending for themselves: this plunged Clive into a more hopeless state of debt than ever. But he began to show what he had not shown before either in school or since leaving it, a desire to employ his time to a useful end. Perhaps his misfortunes made him more earnest, more conscious of life's serious purpose. He took an interest in the scene around him. He learnt of the Portuguese conquests in Brazil, of how the country had been torn from the natives; and his whole being was filled with a boyish admiration for the valour of these early conquerors. He even tried to learn the language and acquired quite a fluency in Portuguese during the months he was here.

2

The rest of the journey to India, confined within the swaying wooden hulk, to the crack of the heavy sails in the wind, he employed in supplementing that inadequate knowledge of India with which he had set out from England. Most of the passengers and crew had been to the East already. There were also books in the ship's small library. In a vague way Clive had known that those who did not perish in the hot, deadly tropics, came home laden with riches. He had seen these homing exiles, tricked out in gorgeous finery, driving in magnificent equipages. 'Nabobs' they were called, jestingly. Gentlemen who had all life's prizes at their feet and the door to society and power held open for them by powdered flunkeys.

¹ This letter is reproduced exactly as it is written. In Clive's other letters the punctuation is supplied and unnecessary capitals are omitted.

But on board a new aspect of India was revealed to him. An India that was a strange mixture of the primitive and the highly civilized. The India that had given the West its mathematics and its medicine. Five hundred years before King Alfred burnt his cakes at Athelney, while all Europe entrusted its surgery to barbers, in India skilled men, with a complete understanding of anatomy, were using their knives with assurance and success. Plastic surgery, unknown to us until the First World War, was already supplying new noses and ears to the better circumstanced Indian victims of a cruel judiciary that inflicted mutilation with as light a conscience as today a justice of the peace imposes fines for spirited or spirituous motoring. And in that age England was as lavish with her mutilations, though lacking the plastic compensations. In music, in literature and in science India had scaled her heights while the forebears of Beethoven, Voltaire and Oliver Lodge were still groping through the dark forests of middle Europe.

Clive was told of marble palaces with walls perforated and patterned like lace; of temples wondrously carved and ablaze with precious stones—more magnificent, more impressive than St. Mark's in Venice or St. Peter's in Rome; of brocades and silks christened with an apter poetic rapture than our cocktails—peacock's neck, ripples of silver, moon and stars; of muslins with scarce more substance than the mist of morning; of swords with watered blades emblazoned exquisitely with triumphs of the hunt and the fray. But at the other end of the scale, he had also heard, were crude savagery and superstition; sadistic gods avid for human sacrifice as in the Biblical dawn; the worship of animals; thugs; widows who flung themselves upon their husbands' funeral pyres and perished in an enjoined ecstasy of devotion; jungles with prowling beasts and snakes, taking a terrible toll, as they still do, of human life; weird illnesses that stiffened the limbs in death within an hour; naked women, or almost so, who walked unashamed in the streets, and others who veiled their faces from the masculine gaze with sheets, moving about like ghosts.

Such was the country to which Clive was voyaging. This the board upon which destiny was to throw the dice which it had already begun to rattle.

Wide sweeping miles of sand, flat and fawn and cracking under the tropical sun. The green sea kissed its edge with frothy abandon. From

inland scowled the bastions of a crude fort. Behind this crouched the diffident roofs of long, low, barrack-like structures. Cocoanut palms fringed the roads, along which bullock-carts creaked under loads of muslins, silks and spices borne tediously towards the clearing houses of the East India Company at Madras.

The afternoon was filled with a blinding glare that shot through the shutters of the little room in which a youth barely out of his teens sat with his face in his hands. He was listless and despondent. He had come here with ambitions and hope, for the prospect of India had opened out vistas of adventure and wealth; but he had achieved no more than an office stool and intense unpopularity. By temperament he was fitted neither for the rigours of indoor routine nor for discipline. He chafed against fate for dragging him across the turbulent seas to condemn him to entering up ledgers and taking stock of the bales assembled in the warehouse for export. He was restless, unhappy. He had begun steeped almost irretrievably in debt and the repeated appeals he made to his father for help took months to reach home and months to be answered. On his absurdly low salary of five pounds a year it was impossible for him to extricate himself. Yet for five years he would have to be content to exist on this pittance and then, raised to the dignity of a factor, he would be given the more alluring but still hopelessly inadequate salary of fifteen pounds a year. The future seemed barren. No writer (as clerks were called) could in fact manage on this pay. All mortgaged their tomorrows at an exorbitant interest to the black money-changers of the bazaar. But Clive was strong-minded enough to resist this.

He had no friends. He beheld with a shudder the ten or twelve youths who, like himself, were condemned to years of unrewarding book-keeping and clerking, sink slowly, unprotesting, into industrious insignificance. They were treated as in a school, without the redeeming opportunities for mischief. Twice a day they had to appear in church. All meals had to be eaten in hall. They were subjected to irritating restrictions and rules. It was more than Clive could stand. In every letter he begged his father to get him transferred to Bengal, "which would be much more advantageous to me, as it would not only reduce my expenses, as all manner of provisions are much cheaper, but also allows greater liberty of merchandising, and trade is in a much more flourishing condition than at Fort St. George,¹ there being three times the number of ships always in constant employ,

¹ Madras.

and any of the Company servants may trade as largely as they please; therefore make it my request you'll make all the interest you can to remove me. There has been two writers moved there lately, so flatter myself with the hopes of succeeding." Ambition was hemmed in where he was. It had sought in vain to vault the encircling walls.

Clive was homesick too. His heart yearned for the vanished joys of a childhood spent "with my relations and friends in Lancashire. At intervals when I think of my dear native England it affects me. . . ." His letters are filled with a deep longing and a maudlin sentimentality, unnatural to one of his youth and his temperament. He dwells on the missed delights of companionship. He finds the intense heat irksome. It has affected his health. Reflecting upon all that has intervened since he left England, he realizes with sorrow and despair that he has not enjoyed one happy day since he left his home. "I am not acquainted with one family in the place," he writes, "and have not assurance enough to introduce myself without being asked. If the state I am now in will admit of happiness, it must be when I am writing to my friends. Letters surely were first invented for the comfort of such solitary wretches as myself."

His soul was clouded with melancholy. Contemplating, his face still in his hands, the confined, oppressive years he had spent in this heat-bitten, fly-blown edge of the world, he saw, illumined by a white, unpleasant glare, three or four incidents in which he had figured and which lost him all hope of achieving any popularity among his fellows. There was his initial display of insubordination towards the official under whom all the young writers were placed. A demand for apology refused, Clive had been compelled to give it on the order of the Governor, Nicholas Morse, a descendant of Oliver Cromwell and of Ireton too, who had married Cromwell's daughter Bridget. Clive complied, but since it was unpalatable, he did it with a display of ungraciousness that the official sought to cover with the cordial hand of forgiveness. The superior invited the offending Clive to dinner.

"No, sir," replied the arrogant youth, "the Governor commanded me to apologize, but he did not command me to dine with you."

When this attitude was known the detestation of the others for the young prig was intensified.

Downcast, miserable, oppressed by despair, Clive lowered his hands and gazed vacantly about the little room. Then he rose from his chair in a daze and walked slowly towards a table, from the drawer

of which he drew out a pistol. Toying with it for an instant, he raised it suddenly to his head, filled still with thoughts that distracted and distressed; then he pressed firmly upon the trigger. The trigger snapped, but Clive was amazed to find himself still alive. He pressed his finger again upon it. Again there was a gentle click; and as he began to examine the weapon the door was flung open and in walked a fellow writer.

"Take this," said Clive, thrusting the pistol towards him, "and fire it out of the window."

Puzzled at the request, wondering if it was a jest, the other complied and to Clive's amazement the cocked striker did not click in vain this time. There was a flash and a report, and the discharge sped through the window and spat up some sand several inches into the air.

Clive sprang up in surprise and gazed in amazed contemplation. Then, turning to the other, he relieved him of the weapon and restored it to the drawer.

"I have twice," he said, "snapped that pistol to my own head. It seems that fate must be reserving me for some purpose."

What that purpose was he did not know, but he strove to make himself worthy of it. He entered into the life of the settlement with a greater readiness, a firmer confidence, and he spent his leisure in the library of the Governor, poring over Plutarch's Lives, preparing for that uncertain destiny.

CHAPTER III

The Refugee

I

MADRAS had been British for a hundred years when Clive arrived there; but we could in no sense be regarded as owners. We came neither as conquerors nor as colonists, but as traders; and all we wanted was a patch of land upon which to build a warehouse and some houses for our agents to live in. Our stay was dependent upon the whim of the Grand Moghul, nominal ruler of all India; but most of his provincial governors had defied his authority and were now ruling in independent splendour. From them land had to be rented for our factories, as they were called. From them within a few miles of us, both here and in Bengal, the French had also leased trading stations.

The settlements were perched insecurely on the fringe of this vast continent. A few of them were protected by crude forts, garrisoned meagrely by European mercenaries. They were at the mercy of every armed band of marauders, all of whom had to be plied with constant bribes to be restrained from plunder. Trade was affected by local wars between rival Indian rulers. From time to time the factories were seized and the entire white population massacred. On the slenderest pretext, justifiable or fabricated, the ruling Nawab descended upon the settlers, confiscated their possessions and drove them out into the sea.

But, as chief of our trading settlements, Madras enjoyed a prosperity and security that had brought a quarter of a million people under the protecting guns of Fort St. George. All but three hundred of these were natives of various creeds and castes. The English merchants and their families numbered barely a hundred. The garrison, impressed chiefly from the taverns and gaols of Europe, mustered two hundred.

The entire service was deplorably paid. The Governor received but £200 a year with a gratuity of £100, and Members of Council got no more than £40 or £50 annually. "Indeed," wrote Clive to his father, "if we had nothing more to depend on but their allowance, it would be to very little purpose for us to spend our time here." But there was a compensating privilege—the right to trade privately, which the East India Company granted even to their clergymen. By this means many amassed wealth in a few years. But the privilege was

withheld from subordinates. No writer, no factor was allowed automatically to exercise it; one had to be a writer for five years and a factor for a further three before one could qualify. The senior merchants in receipt of salaries of no more than £30 a year were thus able to live in garden houses and to maintain a staff of as many as a hundred servants. They had men to walk beside them with umbrellas to protect their heads from the sun, a luxury in which no junior was permitted to indulge. They kept *palanquins*¹ and carriages, and entertained each other sumptuously at dinner. Every writer dreamed of attaining such lordly affluence. Clive, more ambitious than the rest, awaited it with impatience.

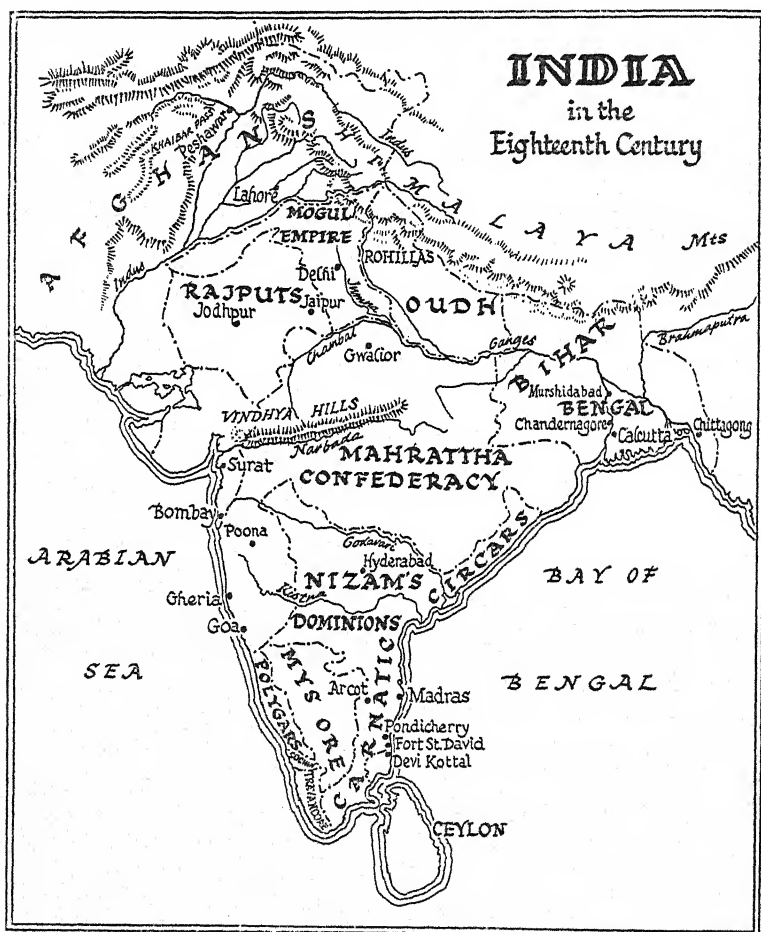
The daily round left him with more leisure than the conditions and climate allowed him to employ. The settlement was roused at dawn by a gun fired from the fort, which all but shook them out of their beds. Work began at nine and ended at midday, for the glare and heat of the afternoon produced a drowsiness which it was considered wise to indulge. At four, if a ship had come in or was about to depart, a few more hours had to be spent at the warehouse; otherwise the young men sat about the sands and watched the catamarans ride the surf, bearing passengers and freight half a mile out to sea, for no ships could come nearer to the shore. The evenings were devoted to card-playing and drinking, either in the tavern or in one another's homes.

2

Ever since Clive's arrival there had lain upon Madras the shadow of France and of Dupleix. The settlement knew from the moment Dupleix became Governor of the French Settlement at Pondicherry that it was his one desire to oust the English from India. He had been feverishly engaged in building fortifications and in recruiting Indians to fight under the French flag; and when the news reached India that war had broken out between England and France all knew that a conflict between Pondicherry and Madras was imminent. The English resolved to strike first. The Home Government had sent the East India Company a fleet of warships to aid them in the war, and the vessels left Madras impatiently for Pondicherry. The French settlement lay at our mercy. Dupleix knew that his own resources could not save it. So

¹Covered beds that were carried by coolies through the streets rather like sedan chairs.

he appealed to the Nawab of the Carnatic, through whose indulgence both the English and the French had been allowed to settle upon that coast. The Nawab refused to let us exercise our quarrels upon his territory. He sternly forbade our making any assault upon the French possessions; and obediently our fleet sailed back to Madras.



Secure in the hope of a similar immunity, which had in fact been assured the English by the Nawab, we were quite unprepared for the French when they descended with fleet and army upon Madras. La Bourdonnais, a wild-eyed mercenary, who had sailed under the Portuguese flag and had later been Governor of the French island of

Mauritius, was in command of this expedition. Burying their jealousies, Dupleix and he worked together on a plan made years before the outbreak of war. Dupleix's step-daughter, still in Madras with her husband, fulfilled admirably the duties of a spy.

In his turn now, the Governor of Madras appealed to the Nawab, who, however, did nothing, possibly because the English had neglected the precaution of approaching him with gifts; so the French guns were turned on our settlement, which for three nights and three days suffered a severe bombardment. The fort replied, ineffectually. The garrison was in charge of a superannuated Swede, who used to be in the ranks. The town was rent by uproar and dissension. The merchants indulged in unseemly wrangles with the Council. The Governor finally decided upon surrender and rushed to the gates with his keys. Clive saw La Bourdonnais march through the streets with his victorious troops. He saw the English flag hauled down and the French standard run up on the flagstaff above the fort. Madras was held to ransom for £400,000. The Governor's two children were taken as hostages.

3

Slowly Clive wound a turban about his head. His companion raised astonished eyebrows. There was amusement in the depths of those grey eyes which would have found vent in an explosive guffaw had not the occasion been so grave and so fraught with danger.

"You look the native to the life, Bob," he exclaimed.

Clive's round, podgy face had already been stained a modest brown. A black beard, carefully laid, adorned his cheeks and chin. Black hair hid the original brown under the turban. The long white gown of his servant covered his squat Celtic figure.

Edmund Maskelyne, his companion in the adventure and destined to be more intimately linked with him in later life, had already effected his own disguise. Thus attired, they tiptoed through the window into the night.

They had no desire to remain in Madras under French rule. The old jealousy between La Bourdonnais and Dupleix had flared up with this conquest. Dupleix insisted that he was in supreme control of all French India and refused to let Madras be ransomed. La Bourdonnais, meanwhile, having received a large part of the money, made off without further argument. On the way to France he was captured by

an English privateer; his wife and children, however, were lucky enough to escape in another ship with the money and their jewels. When released, La Bourdonnais returned to France to enjoy his wealth, but found himself in the Bastille for the theft of this money.

Dupleix seized Madras following La Bourdonnais' departure, and proclaimed it a French settlement. He ordered the arrest of the English Governor, Nicholas Morse, and his Council and had them led in chains through the streets of Pondicherry. Blood that had flowed in triumph at Naseby in Cromwell and Ireton flowed now in humiliation in Morse their descendant. The English merchants, prisoners on parole, were indignant but powerless. But while others bewailed their lot and deplored the baseness of the French, Clive's active mind found a way out in flight.

Together, he and Maskelyne made a disguised bid for freedom and achieved it. A few days later they arrived undetected at our not distant possession of Fort St. David. Madras remained French for three years, until the Peace of Aix la Chapelle compelled Dupleix, to his disgust, to restore it to the English.

CHAPTER IV

The Duel Begins

I

FORT ST. DAVID! The imposing garden-house of the Governor which he was himself destined to occupy! Clive observed, as he crept into this smaller settlement, still in his disguise, that here the sandy barrenness of Madras was less in evidence. Fruit trees grew in abundance. Cocoanut palms lined the sea front. There were numerous green groves of bamboo and plantain. Giant mango trees alternated with the more graceful almond.

Clive had more time than ever on his hands, for there was no work at all to be done now. The war and the proximity of Pondicherry, which lay only a dozen miles to the north, prevented their employing this leisure in excursions for shooting and jaunts up the river. There were not even ships from home to relieve the monotony, ships which brought not only letters and new faces, but girls, eight and ten in each load, to be the admiration and pride of the settlement, and often, in a few weeks, the brides of rich merchants. There was nothing to do. The men just idled about the town or watched that odoriferous yet fascinating panorama of life in the vast native quarter beyond the walls.

The Indians, here as at Madras, were, Clive observed, timid, even cowardly. In their disputes they battled with voices rather than with fists. They were lazy and fond of sleep. Save for the ostentation and the jewelled magnificence of princes and nobles, all, often even the wealthy, walked abroad with only their loins unexposed.

Caste exclusiveness divided the Hindus, as it still does, with relentless severity. Unapproachable, secure in authority and privilege, were the priests or Brahmins, the twice-born. At the other end of the social scale were the outcasts, the untouchables, "who are held in such contempt," writes a contemporary observer, "that the other natives will not suffer them to come near them. When they have occasion to purchase anything, they are obliged to call aloud at a distance, and set down their basket with their money in it; then the seller advances, and puts in what they want, and after he is gone from

the spot, the buyer comes and carries it away. Their common employment is looking after cattle; they are never permitted to sleep on the earth, but in trees. If only the breath of one of them were accidentally to come across a Neir (one of the higher castes) the latter would not fail instantly to put him to death. To avoid this, when they see a Neir coming towards them, they take care to get out of his way. They are never suffered to come near the towns but on one particular day in the year, when they are sure to get together in crowds, and if they can be so fortunate as to throw dirt on any woman that passes by, she immediately becomes their slave, let her be of whatever caste."

Only women of the lower orders walked abroad unveiled. They fetched water in pitchers balanced gracefully on their heads and collected cow-dung from the streets for fuel. The rest lived in the seclusion of the purdah. They lived, multiplied and died within the confined limits of the harem, taking the air upon the flat roofs which were screened by high walls. Occasionally a veiled woman, a sheet covering her from head to toe, walked through the streets. The beauties of the bazaars lolled at their windows, jangling their bracelets and smiling with bella-donna'd eyes at the passers-by. The young writers and factors tiptoed with fluttering hearts up creaking stairs into this scented paradise. The wealthier merchants were adequately served in their own homes by attendant concubines.

By the wells, frogs croaked. In the streets camels bobbed their ridiculous heads and elephants wagged their pendulum trunks. Oxen did the work of horses, even drawing carriages.

There was a medley of tongues—Tamil, Hindu, pidgin-English, French, Portuguese. The Sahibs used interpreters for their weightier transactions; but for the rough usage of everyday a compromise of their respective tongues, eked out with elaborate gestures, served both servant and master.

2

The tall candles on the card table cast weird shadows upon the white walls. There was a recurrent tinkle of glasses as the men gathered round and exchanged commentative glances over the play. The air was heavy with smoke. But there was more in the atmosphere than the pungent aroma of tobacco. There was in it a tenseness that threatened at any moment to snap. Most of the players were losing heavily

to a large, thick-set, sour-faced man seated in shirt sleeves, who swept the money towards him after every deal.

Suddenly Clive sprang up, his brown eyes blazing.

"You have cheated, sir," he proclaimed, "and I am damned if I shall pay you."

How true the charge was all knew; but they preferred to pay their dues meekly, rather than challenge the consequences. Clive found no corroborative support from the spectators.

The man accused held Clive's eyes fixedly, his lower lip thrust forward. Then, hurling the table aside, he rose and confronted his accuser with squared shoulders.

The crowd formed a circle about the two men. The challenge they anticipated was soon forthcoming. Pistols were brought and Clive was ordered to prove his words with his weapon.

No seconds were sought or appointed. The men measured the appointed paces, and Clive, ever strategic, fired first; but missed. His antagonist, who could have shot him down like a dog, stepped forward, the pistol still in his hand. He came to within a pace of Clive and, pressing the muzzle against the younger man's brow, demanded an instant disavowal.

"Withdraw the charge or I fire," he roared.

Clive looked at him unflinchingly. "Fire and be damned," he replied. "I said you cheated and I say so still. I will never pay you."

So taken aback was the other at this cool daring, that he laid down his weapon, declaring that Clive must be mad.

The spectators, no less astonished, gathered closer and showered their congratulations on Clive. The scene they had witnessed illumined with clarity what many in Fort St. David had already begun to suspect, that here was one who was irrefutably the most fearless of them all.

Soon afterwards there came to Clive that opportunity for which greatness lies in wait. The French, flushed with their success at Madras, rushed upon Fort St. David, outnumbering the English forces by five to one. They were resolved to sweep the English out of India. Clive seized the chance. He volunteered for service with the army.

Five thousand years of warring for the possession of India, first by Asiatic tribes and then by the nations of Europe, had resolved itself at this juncture into a grim, final duel between France and

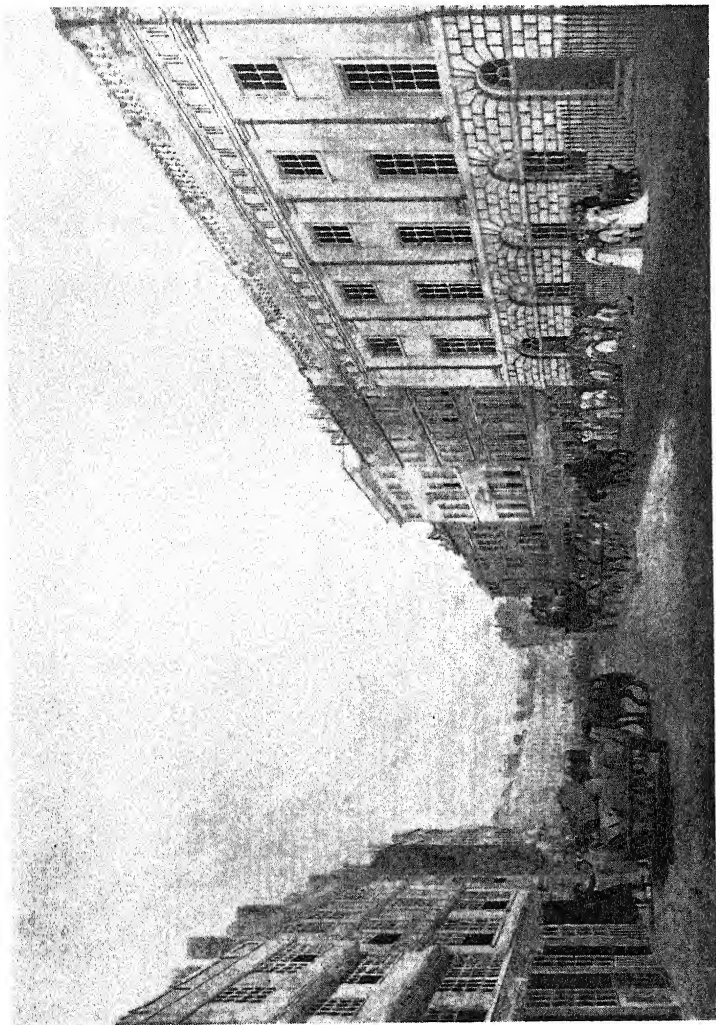
England—a duel from which England was to emerge victorious, undisputed master of all India.

3

Within two months of Clive's arrival at Fort St. David the French were at the gates. Once again the English, who had only three hundred soldiers, a third of them half-castes, appealed to the Nawab of the Carnatic. Upon this occasion he came to our aid with an army commanded by two of his sons. At Madras he had intervened at last but he was too late. The French repelled his punitive force at Adyar; it was the first occasion on which a handful of Europeans had overthrown the vast army of a Nawab. This encounter revealed to Dupleix, as it did to Clive, who had celebrated his coming of age while the French guns thundered at Madras, that the superior arms and discipline of the West more than counter-balanced the weight of native numbers. Until the coming of the Portuguese the Indians had never seen a musket. Even now vast sections of their armies fought with bows and arrows. Their crude field-guns exploded and wrought havoc in their own ranks. They had as much chance against Western artillery as Indian frontier tribesmen, armed with rifles, had later against aerial machine-guns. The West was destined to win. It was merely a question of English or French.

In his first engagement Clive chased the French (who had taken possession of the Governor's garden-house and had been surprised there by the Nawab's army) out of the settlement and on towards Pondicherry, which they reached, he records, "the evening of the same day greatly fatigued and frightened".

At this point Dupleix, with his customary cunning, bought off the Nawab. While the English tried to rely on justice, the French employed the subversive power of money. Cut off from our powerful ally, we were soon confronted with another attack. But this too we repulsed. Shortly afterwards Clive was given a commission. He became an Ensign in the Second Company of Foot Soldiers.



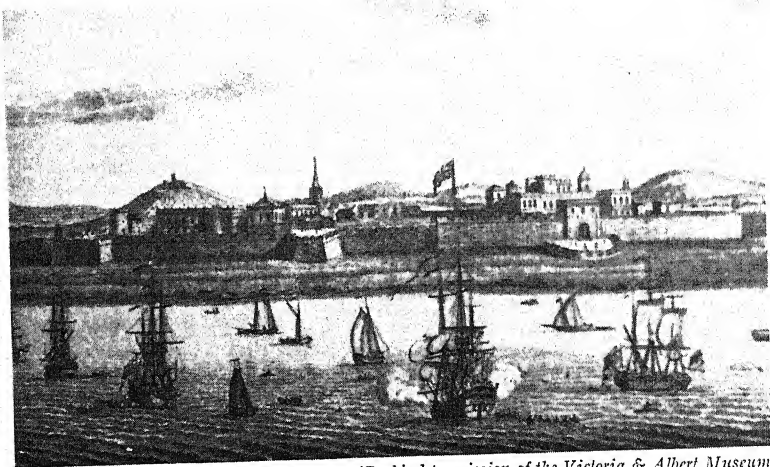
(By kind permission of the Commonwealth Relations Office)

The premises of the East India Company in Leadenhall Street, London, as it was after being refaced in 1736. (From a coloured drawing by T. Malton.)



(By kind permission of the Victoria & Albert Museum)

The English settlement in Madras in Clive's time.



(By kind permission of the Victoria & Albert Museum)

Fort St. George, the fort in Madras, which was held by a very small English garrison. (Engraving after J. van Ryne.)

CHAPTER V

Revenge

I

BLINKING under the relentless August sun, Clive stood within sight of Pondicherry, dressed in his officer's scarlet and gold. The tide of war had turned. Driven back from Fort St. David again and again, the French were now defenders of their own capital.

Only ten days before a strong English fleet, long overdue, sailed into the delighted vision of the English settlers. It was commanded by the famous Admiral Boscawen, who had already won distinction in the Spanish War, and was to gain still more in the years ahead; though not in India. Reinforcements rolled in from our scattered factories and paraded under the command of Major Stringer Lawrence, newly arrived to take charge of the garrison. He was an old soldier, raised from the ranks. Fat, well-fed, and fifty, he had fought at Gibraltar, in Flanders, and more recently at Fontenoy and Culloden. He was new to India, but in the seven months until the coming of Boscawen's fleet, he had reorganized the army, extended the artillery, and added the arm of cavalry.

Now from the sea Boscawen's guns, augmented by the guns of the Dutch fleet, also at war with France, blazed furiously at the imposing French city. It was the richest European possession in the country. Upon its capture would turn the entire balance of the future. The combined fleets had landed just below the town the largest army yet put in the field by any European power in India. There were nearly four thousand white soldiers and two thousand natives disciplined and armed as our men.

Clive, his eyes narrowed in the glare, noticed that the town was strongly fortified—stronger than Madras or Fort St. David, but it could be taken if our leaders didn't blunder. Boscawen was in chief command as the superior ranking officer.

Now the land batteries have begun to roar. Clive is working frenziedly at his gun; but since he is new to it all, there are smiles of derision on the faces of the regular officers around him.

In his zeal, Clive, needing more ammunition, dashes back for supplies, instead of despatching a corporal or a sergeant. Whispers are exchanged by the others.

"Civilians never make good soldiers," sneers one. "Here's Clive running away because he's afraid."

But Clive returns. He goes back to his gun.

When what has been said is repeated to Clive by a friend the dark brow puckers ominously. There is fire in the pale brown eyes. Clive knows who has made the remark, for he has been conscious of the man's derision.

"Hmm! Cowardice!" he repeats, his knuckles whitening; he strides out in quest of the offender. Clive challenges him; the man is aloof, haughty. His disavowal is neither satisfactory nor sincere. Clive insists on an apology. Their voices rise; the words are angry. Upon each sunburnt brow the sweat comes out in beads that twinkle in the glare and glide in streaks down the cheeks. Eyes are hard and intent. Clive's narrow. With a minatory fist he repeats his demand.

Flushed, embarrassed at the gathering crowd, the other rushes upon Clive and strikes him. In an instant Clive's sword is drawn. They prepare to fight, but are separated.

The incident is reported and a court of inquiry is appointed to examine the conduct of the two officers. Clive, so often reprimanded for his youthful impetuosity and turbulence, emerges victorious now. He is absolved entirely. The other is commanded to ask Clive's pardon in the presence of the entire battalion.

It was a moment of triumph, but for Clive it was not enough. His pride still smarted under the blow the other had struck him. After the public apology had been tendered, Clive sought personal satisfaction. He followed the offender, now dazed and humbled, and raising a cane above the crouching man's head was about to strike him, when something pitiful in the other's eyes made him stay his hand:

"No, I shan't beat you," Clive said. "You are too contemptible even for that."

The next day the man resigned his commission. On one incautious word a military career ended ingloriously, and another started. Events were to prove that, whatever other epithet might be used, the word 'Coward' could never with accuracy or impunity be applied to Clive.

2

Pondicherry could not be taken. The attack, fine in conception, bold and even practicable in design, was marred by a succession of blunders, which served to supply Clive with one of his earliest lessons in warfare. "How very ignorant we were of the art of war in those days," he observed some years later, recalling Pondicherry. "Some of the engineers were masters of theory without practice, and those seemed wanting in resolution; others there were who understood neither, yet were possessed of courage sufficient to have gone on with the undertaking if they had known how to go about it. There was scarce an officer who knew whether the engineers were acting right or wrong till it was too late in the season, and we had lost too many men to begin an approach again."

The troops were of very poor quality. When a random shot killed one of the sailors in the trenches all the others scrambled out and fled, and the soldiers speedily followed their craven example. In the advanced trenches Clive alone was able to make his men maintain their positions. Another officer, while reprimanding his sepoys, was shot dead by one who resented his attempt to check their flight.

The Commander-in-chief of our land forces, Major Stringer Lawrence, was captured by the enemy and carried off as prisoner. Our assault on Pondicherry proved a fiasco. We lost a thousand white men through death in action or by sickness.

"Clive," an English officer at the siege has recorded in his journal, "by his gallant conduct gave the first prognostic of that high military spirit which was the spring of his future actions."

3

On the other side Dupleix distinguished himself too. But he was no soldier. Some accused him of timidity because, though he planned the campaigns, he never took the field with his troops. He had indeed no taste for fighting. His was not the daring, death-defying spirit of Clive. He excelled in intrigue and cunning. He planned and plotted with feverish restlessness. His triumphs were won by the manipulation of invisible strings. Clive observed him with admiration and imitated him later with overwhelming success.

Dupleix was a small, spirited man, with a profile that Napoleon was to make famous fifty years later. In his palace at Pondicherry he lived in a magnificence that few of the neighbouring princelings could equal. During an interchange of courtesies between his predecessor and the Moghul Emperor there had been conferred upon that Frenchman some flamboyant Eastern titles and decorations. These Dupleix, on assuming office, adopted with alacrity as part of the dignity attaching to his position. He called himself a Nawab and a Commander of 4,500 Horse in the army of the Indian Emperor. It impressed the natives, and prestige, Dupleix knew, was power.

Five years before Clive was born Dupleix, though only twenty-three, had a seat on the governing Council of Pondicherry. He was fortunate in his father, who was Director-General of the French East India Company and possessed of great wealth; but in his youth, Joseph François Dupleix resented the parental contempt poured upon his scientific enthusiasms. The boy had to be bullied and bribed into abandoning these unworthy, because unprofitable, aspirations. At seventeen he was sent to sea. He travelled to the East and to America. The long journeys, the lands he visited, fired his boyish mind with new ambitions. He returned prepared to bow to his father's bidding, and was despatched to Pondicherry. Here his nimble brain, aided by the commercial astuteness inherited from his father, raised him to affluence in a few years. While Clive held an indulgent aunt and uncle in thrall by his petulance, Dupleix was already shaping the destiny of the French in India.

Just before his appointment as Governor of Pondicherry, Dupleix married the widow of his closest friend, an attractive but coloured woman of thirty-three, who had married previously at the age of eleven and had already borne eleven children. Five of these were still living and came with her to Dupleix. Born in Pondicherry, of half-native stock, she spoke with fluency all the neighbouring vernaculars. She was also blessed with a ready wit and an aptitude for intrigue that was of the utmost value to her husband. When her daughter married and settled in Madras she promptly enlisted the girl as a spy. Even while the English and the French had smiled in friendship at each other's boards, M. and Mme Dupleix treacherously used hospitality to screen their scheming. They established contact with our servants. Just before the third of the French attacks on Fort St. David the English Governor's *dubash*¹ was discovered in correspondence 'in the country language'

¹Chief servant.

with Dupleix, revealing to him "exact intelligence of the most minute transactions—All our counsels were betrayed." The *dubash* was hanged by us. Some sepoys who had been induced by these intrigues to desert to the French, were caught and banished by us to St. Helena.

Madame Dupleix took an active part in the defence of Pondicherry. Braving the fire of our guns, she walked with her husband upon the ramparts to encourage the soldiers. Madame even drew up plans for some of the sorties.

CHAPTER VI

Intrigue Triumphant

I

FROM its beetling Himalayan brow, stretching for two thousand miles along the northern frontier, to the disrespectful tongue bared mockingly at Ceylon, India was swept continuously by fierce gusts of intrigue that whistled as viciously about the palaces of Delhi as around the smallest thrones set up in fortress or mountain fastness. No Nawab, no Rajah was secure. Sons plotted against their fathers, and, with momentary success, put to the sword as many of the family as were incautious enough to remain within reach. In the capital of Moghul India Emperors had for two hundred years waged war upon their rebellious sons. In the South family ambitions drenched districts as vast as England and France in blood. Conditions were not dissimilar in Europe, where the royal Georges quarrelled for a century and a half with their sons and princely ambitions licked their chops over recurrent wars of succession.

The Peace of Aix la Chapelle shattered Dupleix's hopes. France and England were no longer at war. The repulse of the English at Pondicherry could not be pursued. Instead, Madras had to be restored. The conquest was set at nought. A new means had now to be devised to further the aspirations of Dupleix and establish the supremacy of France. He knew that behind every Indian throne lurked a dozen claimants, some in concealment, others in confinement. If he could but secure one with ability and ambition, to set up as Nawab of the Carnatic, lord of that vast littoral upon which both English and French had their settlements, he would be able to wring from him concessions that would definitely establish French predominance. Backed with the arms and money of France, it was attainable. Besides, Dupleix had a score to settle with the present Nawab, who had dared to challenge his taking of Madras.

Dupleix found an admirable claimant languishing in a Mahratta prison. Exceedingly able, cunning and unscrupulous, Chunda Sahib based his claim on a relationship by marriage with the ruling house. The marauding Mahratta horsemen who galloped across Central

India plundering, burning, and exacting vast ransoms, had seized him and cast him into their prison; here both he and his son had been lying forgotten for seven years. Dupleix decided to ransom the pretender and carry him at the head of the French army to a throne.

He paid £70,000 for the release of Chunda. Vast promises of territory, privileges and power were exacted from him and French preparations were pressed forward in feverish secrecy. But the English, aware of all that was contemplated, anticipated him by indulging in a similar though less ambitious manœuvre in the small principality of Tanjore, lying to the south of Fort St. David.

2

The English wished to adjust their pride after its discomfiture at Pondicherry. There was a vast army at Fort St. David, set idle by the termination of war. What better than to forestall the French by using our troops for the reinstatement (in return, of course, for rewards) of the King who had earlier been dragged off the throne of Tanjore! True, the present Rajah was popular and the English were already in enjoyment of privileges from him that were assured by treaty. But the promise of the alluring port of Dovicotah, not far from Fort St. David, dangled before their enchanted eyes by Shahaji, the deposed king, was not one that could be scorned. So the bugles blared across the parade ground and the lounging army leapt to arms. Lawrence being still in his French prison, Captain Cope was given the command. Clive, more enamoured of shot and powder than of ledger and office stool, marched with the rest towards Tanjore.

Cope's detachment comprised 430 white men and a thousand sepoy. During the short march southward the force was overtaken by a sudden burst of the monsoon which, sweeping in from the sea, scattered the heavy baggage and the guns. When the storm abated, the infantry became a search party for the artillery. Both units suffered a considerable loss of life. Almost all the transport coolies were killed, and the native soldiers were reduced to a third of their number. Cope could not go on. He returned discomfited. The Tanjore venture ended as a tragic farce. But it could not be left so. Our punctured glory, at which Pondicherry was laughing, had to be repaired.

So a second expedition, twice as large and commanded now by the

released Major Lawrence, set out; their aim was first to secure the proffered port that was to be the price of their aid. So the English made straight for Dovicotah. The army, with Clive as a lieutenant, travelled by sea and landed opposite Dovicotah fort. The guns were trained, and for three days played with deadly effect, tearing a breach in the fortifications.

Could the breach be stormed? Between it and the English lay a rivulet and an embankment that the enemy were hurriedly throwing up. A ceaseless fire of matchlocks spat at us from the fort. It was doubtful if the breach could even be reached. Only one who was wholly without fear, bold, venturesome, and indifferent to death would dare to undertake such a task.

Clive volunteered.

He led a party of thirty-four white men and a few hundred Indians. They forded the rivulet with difficulty. Then Clive gave the order to charge. They dashed madly towards the breach, but the white men went alone. The native soldiers would not venture farther.

Then suddenly, cut off from their support, the thirty-four white men saw the enemy's cavalry burst upon them from around a bend. The horsemen attacked from the rear so as to destroy all possibility of retreat. The thirty-four fought valiantly, but, caught between two fires, suffered terrific slaughter.

Now thirty of them have fallen. Only Clive and three others remain, still fighting. There is the flash of a sword. It rises in a glistening curve and swoops down, whistling, upon Clive. With a dexterous swerve he has eluded it. Slowly the four men fight their way back to the native troops who had left them to this fate.

Major Lawrence, meanwhile, has hurried forward with the rest of the army. They rush upon the cavalry. Fourteen horsemen are killed. The rest disperse in panic. Our army swarms through the breach. Dovicotah is won.

Their objective gained, the English are indifferent to the aspirations of their ally, the deposed Shahaji. They have obtained the price for the aid they didn't render, and, on being approached by the existing ruler, show a disposition to treat with him. He offers to let them keep Dovicotah provided no further assistance is given to his rival. The English accept. A treaty is signed.

And what of Shahaji? The English undertake that he shall be restrained from causing further vexation, and, to ensure this, they seize and detain him as a prisoner in Fort St. David.

We got the prize he offered in exchange for a throne; but in return we sentenced him to imprisonment for life.

Judged by the standards of a later era, Britain does not emerge with any credit from this exploit, but such manifestations of individual transgression can hardly be preferred as a charge against an entire nation. There was an equal, and at times a greater, departure from pledge and treaty by individual Frenchmen and Indians, just as there were others, British, French and Indian, who would not swerve from their solemn obligations, however disadvantageous the fulfilment.

Alert, attentive, receptive, Clive was learning his lessons in strategy and statesmanship. He had seen France profit at Madras by a breach of faith. He had seen his own countrymen grab Dovicotah and abandon their pledges. He was to discover later how brittle a promise is with most Indian princes. Slowly his mind throbbed to these new impressions, absorbing astuteness, chicanery, and even double-dealing. He was learning.

3

Just before the Tanjore expedition, Fort St. David was disturbed by the assault of an English clergyman in the streets of the native quarter.

The Rev. Francis Fordyce, equal in rank and pay to the most senior member of Council and waxing rich on the full trading facilities he was allowed to enjoy, had dared to indulge in malicious gossip against Clive. He had described Clive as a scoundrel. He had threatened to break every bone in Clive's body. Warned repeatedly, he had still persisted, until Clive, exasperated beyond endurance, whipped him publicly in the street.

The churchman raised his cane and retaliated. Soon the two were fighting fiercely with their fists. A Captain Lucas who happened to be passing, separated them.

The parson advanced a complaint against Clive to the Governor and Council, but when both men were summoned to explain their conduct, Mr. Fordyce refused to submit to the jurisdiction of the Councillors. He preferred that the directors in London should adjudicate. He thereby suffered by default; for after hearing Clive's story, the Council decided upon Mr. Fordyce's instant dismissal. They learned that he had been chronically disposed to spreading malicious

gossip and had indulged this disposition even at the expense of the Governor and Council. They also learned that while he had busied himself in the affairs of others he had been remiss with his own duties. The burial service over the dead when it wasn't gabbled was neglected. So the Secretary to the Council informed the reverend gentleman "that his allowances will cease from this day".

As for Clive, the Governor and Council placed on record that "he is generally esteemed a very quiet person, and no ways guilty of disturbances;" which, when one recalls the vigour and incident of his earlier years, is hardly consistent with the facts.

CHAPTER VII

India's Garden of Eden

I

THE new treaty having been signed with Tanjore and a garrison left at Dovicotah, Major Lawrence returned to Fort St. David and Clive, for the first time since he had fled from it in disguise, returned to Madras.

The volunteers were disbanded, but Clive abhorred the thought of having to return to his ledger. He would have preferred to remain in the army. Here at last he seemed to have found a career to his taste and his temperament. But it was not to be yet. Major Lawrence, who had a high regard for his daring, gave Clive, to sustain the link, control of the commissariat. It was a position of trust and profit, and Clive accepted it with eagerness. The loneliness, the misery, the privation of the earlier years had now been left behind for ever.

But ill health, which had shadowed his childhood, continued to dog him. The intense heat, the trials of campaigning, brought on a nervous fever that confined him to his bed and necessitated, by its graveness, the constant attendance of a nurse. He weakened and sank. Again death crawled up and peered into the depths of his dark eyes; but the fire was still in them, the will to fight and win; and again death crawled back, cowed.

All through the stifling autumn of 1749 Clive tossed restlessly upon his bed, and, with convalescence, sailed northward to winter in Bengal, where destiny was preparing the stage for his greatest triumphs. Bengal, for which he had longed for five years. Bengal, to which he had begged repeatedly to be transferred.

Clive sailed up the Hughli a sick man, and reclined in the mist-veiled sunshine of Calcutta's mild winter. He was to come again in the vigour of health eight years later to repay Calcutta for its tenderness, and to write his name across its history for ever.

2

Calcutta fascinated Clive. It was vast, temperate in climate, abundant in foliage, populous, wealthy. Madras had sprung like a

cactus from a parched, sterile soil, confronting a roadstead that was dangerous for the greater part of the year. But Calcutta lay sheltered seventy miles up a wide, navigable river in the midst of Bengal's green ricefields. Rich cities, some more extensive, more imposing, more active and more congested than London, lay strewn about the surrounding plain. Foreign settlements, Dutch, French, Danish, English, lined both banks of the Hughli. Here was a province with an abundant offering, far more inviting, infinitely more lucrative than the outposts established along the Southern seaboard.

As in all other settlements, the fort with its flagstaff dominated the skyline in Calcutta. It confronted the river, and, behind it, reflecting the large garden houses of men grown rich in her shelter, lay an artificial lake and its encircling promenade, upon which women in hooped skirts and lofty swaying coiffures took the evening air. The Governor lived within the fort in an elegant Georgian house, linked by a covered walk with the river. Beyond the ramparts were the hospital and, growing every month, a vast cemetery which bespoke the tragic gleanings of an Orient not yet tamed by sanitation. To the north stretched an extensive native town, where traders, scavengers, weavers, bankers, pawnbrokers lived in appalling congestion.

Seven years before, in 1742, this prosperous settlement trembled before the marauding horsemen of the Mahrattas, who burned and pillaged their way to the very gates of Calcutta. Most of Bengal was laid waste. The English merchants despatched a strong force under Captain Minchin, who encouraged them hourly with his letters, each of which declared that he was about to destroy the Mahrattas; but, notwithstanding these assurances, the merchants threw a precautionary fosse around their settlement. To this day, what traces of it are still discernible are spoken of as the Mahratta Ditch. But during Clive's convalescence the ditch lay open, half-filled with refuse and the carcasses of animals, charging the air with noisomeness and death.

The Mahrattas never came to Calcutta. They turned back without Minchin's intervention. The Viceroy of Bengal, equal in independence but superior in power, importance and wealth to the Nawab of the Carnatic, paid a large subsidy to effect this withdrawal.

In the dimmer eras of Hindustan, the Mahrattas were possessed of their own kingdom. It was vast and controlled a population equal to that of half contemporary Europe. But the Moghul conquerors, carrying triumph and death before them, carved out principalities for their dependants until Mahrastra vanished like Wessex. But the

Mahrattas remained. In their native hills they waited. Their opportunity came. While England was dragging its cavalier king to the scaffold, the Mahrattas sounded their tocsins and assembled their hordes. They flocked to Shivaji's standard and terrorized all India for loot. To any king they were prepared to render aid in return for money; they hovered on the outskirts of every argument in the hope of being invited to assist. Here and there some settled down to respectability in little kingdoms of their own conquest. It was from these squat, hideous freebooters that Dupleix ransomed Chunda Sahib to set him up as Nawab of the Carnatic.

3

During his brief winter in Calcutta, Clive, from his convalescent detachment, observed the intense dramas, the follies, the pettiness, the snobbery, the sham, the artificiality of life among the white exiles. It was much as in Madras and Fort St. David, only he had more leisure to observe it. This sparse population, shifting constantly through circumstance or death, and separated settlement from settlement by journeys extending over many weeks, was divided by a caste consciousness born of wealth. Jealousies entered into even the trifles of life. Beneath the oriental pomp and the splendour of many of their homes—the gilded chandeliers, the painted satinwood cabinets and bureaux, the flashing brocades, the gaudy carpets, the battalions of servants—stalked lust and passion. White men were living restrained lives, with not enough women of their own kind. Children were given into marriage, girls not yet in the fullness of their 'teens. Men formed liaisons with the wives of others. There were clandestine meetings, whispers behind fans, tittle-tattle, suspicions, and occasionally duels. Attractive women, who were so disposed, had many lovers, each hidden from the other and all hidden from their husbands. Shyer men, less confident of their ability to fascinate, kept black mistresses. These meetings too were secret. The servants knew. The colony talked. But nothing was flaunted in the face of public conscience; for apart from social ostracism there was an attendant penalty—removal from the settlement. Those not yet discovered dealt relentlessly with their less fortunate fellows.

Clive had no drawing-room graces. A young man of twenty-four, he had not yet accomplished anything to merit distinction. By

disposition he was morose, sullen. His countenance was forbidding and surly. He was short and inclined to corpulence. In his movements he was awkward. The one redeeming feature was his eyes, which blazed from beneath his shaggy brows. He would have won few favours from women already so occupied.

It was a holiday of restorative idleness. In the mornings he rode across the park for exercise. He also indulged that taste for letter writing that grew as he got older; letters written in a bold, neat, clerical hand, but innocent of punctuation and spelling. In the evenings he walked with men and women decked in their beauty spots, their wigs, their gold lace and their peach-bloom brocades. He sat down with them to rich meals, highly spiced curries, cream sweets floating in syrup, and pungent tropical fruits which had done more to fill the cemetery than heat or insanitation. If the night was cool they listened to the harpsichord, or danced a gentle minuet under the large flapping fans that the turbaned and liveried servants waved soothingly above their heads.

Dancing, gossiping, listening, Clive heard the men talk of Aliverdi Khan, the Afghan adventurer who won this vast, rich province of Bengal with the sword, and of the spoilt, over-indulged grandson he had adopted as heir—a boy of ten or eleven, whom Clive was to know better in the years to come as Suraj-ud-Dowlah. He heard, too, of the Black Hole, the dungeon in the Calcutta fort in which refractory soldiers were imprisoned—a dungeon like any other in any English fort in India. And he met Drake and Watts, members of the Council; Orme, who was to write the history of Clive's campaigns; and Omichand, the Hindu merchant and banker: almost all of whom he was to meet again when he returned to Calcutta eight years later.

Warren Hastings, aged eighteen, was at the time on his way out to India to begin, as Clive had begun, by filling bills of lading and entering up ledgers.

CHAPTER VIII

Pretenders

I

WHILE the English were engaged in wresting the worthless spoils of their interference in Tanjore, Dupleix busied himself with far more ambitious schemes, the outcome of which he hoped would be French supremacy in all Southern India.

A unique opportunity presented itself for getting within his grasp those wires that would enliven the most serviceable of princely puppets. The Nizam of the Deccan, Viceroy of all Southern India, to whom the Nawab of the Carnatic himself owed allegiance, died suddenly. With his customary promptitude Dupleix, who was already engaged in assisting Chunda Sahib to the kingdom of the Carnatic, pounced upon the pretender to this superior throne and dragged him into his ambitious plan. He saw France acquiring untold privileges from those he would elevate by this manoeuvre. He saw the English, the only European power still to be reckoned with in India, being driven from the country. The pioneering Portuguese, who came with crucifix and sword, had been swallowed up by Spain; the Dutch were declining in vigour. The English alone remained, the hated English with whom France had warred intermittently ever since William the Bastard, by crossing the Channel, had made Englishmen of his descendants and left them quarrelling over their heritage upon French territory.

The first move was made behind the backs of the English. In July, 1749, while we were busy in Tanjore, Dupleix combined the aims and the armies of the two pretenders, the lesser and the greater, and with French aid defeated the forces of the rightful Nawab of the Carnatic, leaving the Nawab dead upon the field of battle. His two sons who had some years before come to the aid of the English at Fort St. David, were both present at the encounter. The elder was taken prisoner; the other, who was illegitimate, fled to the fortress of Trichinopoly, of which he was governor.

Thus with one bold stroke Dupleix triumphed. Chunda Sahib was instantly proclaimed Nawab of the Carnatic; the other pretender, Muzzafir Jung, was made his overlord and proclaimed Nizam of the Deccan in place of his own uncle, the rightful heir. The conspiring trio

then abandoned themselves to jubilation. They celebrated their triumph in Arcot, the capital of the Carnatic; and proceeded next to Pondicherry to stress France's part in the achievement. The new Nizam presented to the French as a thank offering eighty-one villages adjoining their territory, villages which were not yet his to give.

The balance of success was now emphatically in favour of the French. A despondent despatch was sent from Madras to the directors of the East India Company. "The French have struck at the ruin of your settlements; possessed themselves of several large districts; planted their colours on the very edge of your bounds; and are endeavouring to surround your settlements in such a manner as to prevent either provisions or merchandise being brought to us."

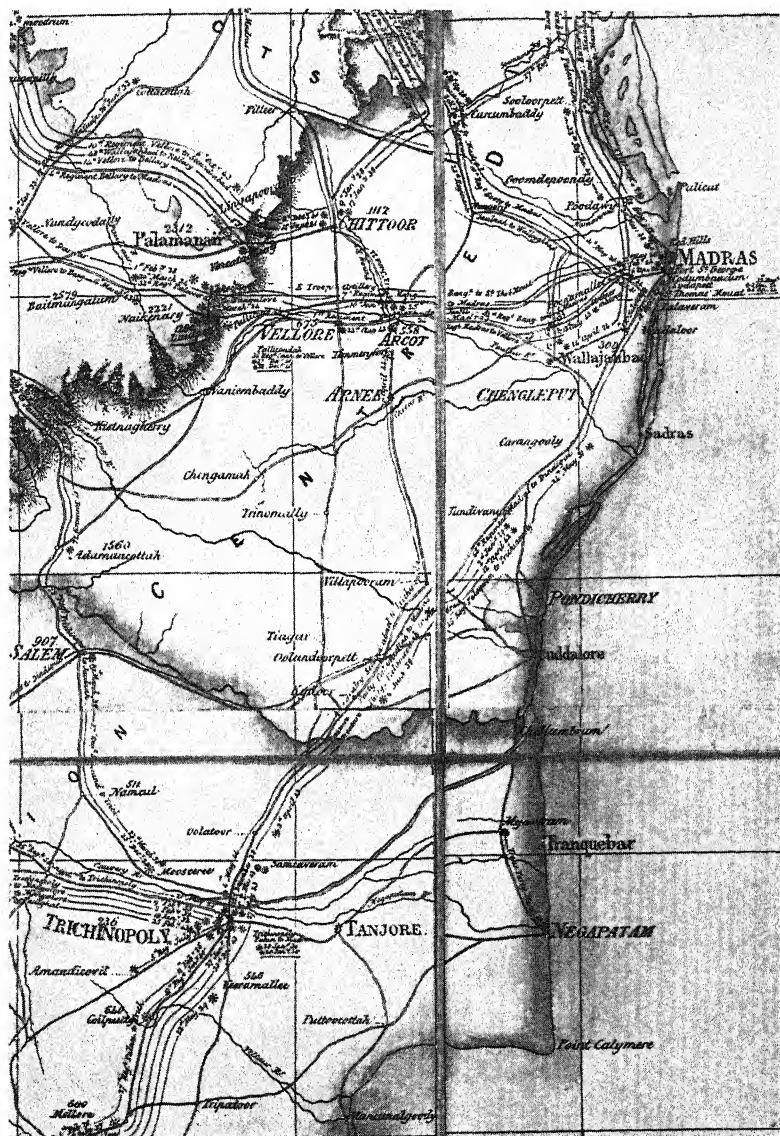
To Dupleix, his dream seemed at last to be materializing—the dream Colbert had when Louis the Fourteenth launched the French East India Company. A dream not only of trade, or colonization (which had followed hot-footed on commerce on the North American continent), but a dream of empire. An Asiatic empire that Napoleon was to strive to further.

The English viewed these happenings with considerable alarm. Inevitably they aligned themselves on the side of the original holders of these exalted offices: Nazir Jung, the rightful Nizam, and Mahommed Ali, the fugitive son of the late Nawab of the Carnatic, who had fled from the field of battle to his refuge at Trichinopoly. This young, bloated, sensuous, long moustached Moslem was accorded full recognition by the English as Nawab of the Carnatic in place of Chunda, who was sly and ruthless, on whose word none could rely. Chunda took an oath once 'on the Koran' that a princess should come to no harm, but within a few hours he deprived her of her entire inheritance. He considered his conscience was unstained because for the Koran on which he swore he had substituted a stone wrapped up in cloth.

During these exploits of Dupleix, Clive was convalescing in Calcutta.

2

Nazir Jung, the deposed Nizam, marched against his insurgent nephew with a formidable army and was joined by Major Lawrence's small detachment from Fort St. David. Dupleix, Chunda and Muzzafir Jung assembled near Pondicherry. Nominally England and France were now at peace; but since a clash between them was inescapable



Part of a contemporary map of Southern India, showing the scenes of some of Clive's early campaigns.



(By kind permission of the Earl of Powis)

Margaret Maskelyne, later Lady Clive, from a miniature by Smart,
in the possession of Clive's family.

in India, the pretence was maintained that the forces were merely mercenaries lent out to rival native factions.

The armies moved towards each other, but before they could meet in battle, the white officers of the French mutinied. The rest was confusion. Chunda Sahib fled. Muzzafir Jung, the pseudo Nizam, flung himself upon the mercy of his uncle, and was led away a prisoner.

Nazir Jung, victorious without having fired a shot, refused now to honour the pledges made to the English when he solicited their aid. Not a yard of the promised territory around Madras would he surrender. Disgusted, Major Lawrence took his detachment home.

Punishing the mutineers, Dupleix strengthened his own forces and sent them again into the field. But Nazir Jung, a drunken sensualist, idled his time with wine and women, celebrating his effortless triumph. His rival now lay in a dungeon. There seemed nothing more to be feared.

But he reckoned without Dupleix. That wily Frenchman, no longer disposed to rely entirely on his army, brought into play his master cards of intrigue. With the aid of Madame Dupleix he got into communication with the nobles in Nazir's camp. By a promise of bribes he induced the peers and the generals to act in unison at the appointed hour. Dupleix even entered into secret negotiation with Nazir himself. If battle and intrigue failed there could still be a treaty. Gestures of friendship were exchanged, terms of a settlement were arranged. Then suddenly the French burst into Nazir's camp by night. Unable to keep his word himself, the Nizam had somehow felt that he could rely upon the word of a Frenchman. He was wholly unprepared. But acting swiftly, he mustered his troops, mounted his elephant and went in person against the enemy. Led beside him on another elephant, was his nephew, Muzzafir Jung, the pretender. He had been dragged from his dungeon to be kept within sight during the battle. By him sat an executioner, the axe poised for use at the first sign of treachery.

To his consternation, Nazir saw a body of his troops retire instead of advancing. He was informed that his nobles had revolted. Blanching, he quickly gave the executioner the appointed sign. Muzzafir Jung turned beseeching eyes upon him; but in the uncle's there was no responsive pity. He repeated the sign, and while the executioner still hesitated a rebellious noble shot the Nizam Nazir through the heart.

Instantly Muzzafir Jung was rescued from the executioner and was once again proclaimed Nizam of the Deccan. By treachery the goal of Dupleix had been won.

It was indeed a triumphant hour for Dupleix. His protégé Chunda Sahib was Nawab of the entire Carnatic—save only for the fortress of Trichinopoly in which his rival, Mahommed Ali, still lurked. And Muzzafir Jung, another of Dupleix's puppets, was his superior, the Nizam. All South India lay within the grip of France.

3

On Boxing Day, 1750, the new Nizam arrived with his court and his chief barons at the gates of Pondicherry and was received there by Dupleix. Together they entered a gold-plated, pearl-set *palanquin* and were carried in lolling splendour, past the cheering and impressed crowds. The next day, dressed as a Mahommedan of the highest rank, his breast a-glitter with Moghul decorations, Dupleix rode in a procession of lancers and elephants to a reception held in the principal square. In gratitude for his treacherous intervention Dupleix had been invested with honours and loaded with presents. He had been proclaimed Nawab of half Southern India, with Chunda Sahib as his deputy. Apart from the concessions bestowed on the French Company, the beaming Nizam conferred as a personal gift on Dupleix a *jaghir*¹ yielding £15,000 a year.

But Muzzafir did not live to enjoy the dignity to which French arms had elevated him. On his way home from these rejoicings, escorted though he was by French troops, he was intercepted by a disgruntled nobleman, whose reward for the murder of the previous Nizam had apparently not equalled his expectations. Muzzafir Jung was attacked with a javelin and killed. With amazing presence of mind, Bussy, the French officer in command of the escort, a man of resolution and vigour, had an uncle of the dead Nizam, a brother of his predecessor, Nazir Jung, instantly released from captivity. This man, Salabat Jung, had been travelling with the baggage, for Nizams always deemed it safer to keep rivals constantly at hand. Bussy assembled the nobles and persuaded them, for the sake of peace and continued support from the French, to proclaim Salabat the new Nizam of the Deccan. Thus was Dupleix's triumph sustained.

Where Nazir Jung fell Dupleix, to commemorate his part in the villainy, raised a monument and a township which, pandering to his overweening vanity, he called Dupleix-Fatebad, the town of Dupleix's victory.

¹Freehold estate.

CHAPTER IX

Opportunity

I

NIZAMS, Nawabs and Rajahs sent their armies into the field fully equipped with all home comforts. They marched with their bazaars, their harems and their nautch girls. Entire families accompanied the combatants, the children travelling in covered wagons. The nobles took their wondrous gilt barges and their hawks to beguile the hours between battles with sailing and hunting.

In their train followed hosts of gesticulating tradesmen, who pitched their tents and proceeded to holler their wares the moment the army halted. Cities of canvas sprang up at every stop, divided by streets, equipped with garden dwellings; with houses of entertainment and of ill-fame; for war had become a chronic condition in India and even those who took pride in being warriors sought to relieve the ardours and risks of battle with the delights of civilization.

In these vast, moving cities, each with a population of half a million or more, sickness and death prowled like park-keepers picking up lives on their spikes. Animals perished. Men, women and children were laid under mounds or consigned as Hindu ashes to the sacred streams. Then the tents were struck and the army moved on, the coolies carrying the baggage, the bullocks pulling the guns, and the rulers riding ahead on elephants. They crossed raging rivers in crude boats made of bamboos covered with hide. A large part of the army never reached the other side; but amid such vast numbers few except the bereaved troubled about the loss. There were no parliamentary inquiries, no parliaments. And the ruler was unconcerned so long as his musicians played in the royal tent that evening and nautch girls waggled their bared waists to the jangling of bracelets and the flash of henna'd fingers poised gracefully behind their heads.

No army risked battle without seeking an omen. Strategy was curbed by superstition. Generals abandoned opportunity if the stars seemed against them. Priests were used for propaganda, giving every lie a religious sanction and significance, as is done even now in more civilized countries.

All through the battle, on the tallest elephant and visible to his entire army, sat the King to inspire his troops with confidence. While they shot their arrows and hurled their javelins, the warriors glanced constantly at the royal mount. The moment it could no longer be seen, they turned and fled, believing all was lost. The rulers were not unaware of the conspicuousness of the target; so anticipating the subterfuge of the cinema by two hundred years, they often employed doubles to play these risky roles. Half a dozen men were often hired to sit in royal robes on tall elephants at various points of the field of battle; the King himself generally took the least exposed station.

Native troops employed by England and France were less encumbered and far better dressed and accoutred than the troops of the Nawabs. They wore trousers and tunics instead of the flowing robes which lent to each Nawab's army the air of a *corps de ballet*. Besides, they all carried matchlocks and were supported by the most efficient artillery in the country.

2

Trichinopoly was the rallying point of Britain's hopes. In this lofty rock fortress, brown and impregnable, girt with grey houses, crowned with an ornate temple and a-swarm with beggars, all of them ash-smeared, Mahommed Ali crouched, venturing forth but rarely. He was almost encircled by the French and by Chunda's men, who were waiting patiently to starve him into submission.

It was clear now even to the most pusillanimous in Fort St. David, which was still the seat of our Government, that if England ever hoped to tilt the scales to her advantage here was the chance for intervention. To remain a spectator would have been to court disaster, to undermine the entire future of the East India Company. France, puffed with her triumphs, would drive the English from the country and secure a monopoly of India's trade. The interest of the shareholders prompted the decision of our factors. The stock-market won India for England.

The Governor of Fort St. David decided to intervene. He had a negligible army, no commanders (for after the refusal of Nazir Jung to fulfill his promise Major Lawrence had left for England) and only one ally, pent up in a fortress; but he realized that, even with the odds against us, it would be folly to stand indolently by. So he despatched a small force, commanded by Captain Gingen, the senior officer but in fact just an incompetent Swiss mercenary. Clive, lately returned

from Calcutta, was now on the civil list. He accompanied the troops as chief of the commissariat, responsible for the purchase and supply of their food and for the elephants, camels and oxen used for their transport.

Gingen was lacking in foresight and quite impervious to suggestion. Despite the advice of others, he bungled his attack on the important fortress of Valconda and then retired to Trichinopoly, where he was promptly bottled up by the enemy. The English thus threw away their opportunity of fighting in open country and by a foolish manoeuvre lost also all their available resources. Our attempt to relieve Trichinopoly ended in disaster.

Clive neither approved of Gingen's tactics nor would accompany him farther. He turned back at Valconda and returned to Fort St. David. A few weeks later he set out again with a convoy of stores. Through a shortage of officers the detachment was placed in charge of a Member of Council, George Pigot, a vigorous and enterprising young man who was destined to be closely associated with Clive in the years ahead. These two, both civilians, piloted the stores and troops across the most difficult stage of the journey and then returned, with merely twelve native soldiers as escort.

The return was attended by adventure. Some wild polygar tribesmen fell upon the two Englishmen and their inadequate guard. Seven of the twelve escorting sepoy were killed; the others fled. Clive and Pigot, with no ammunition left, had to follow their example. Had their horses been less fleet the history of India would no doubt have been different.

3

Clive had now been seven years in India. He had served his five years as a writer and two of the requisite three as a factor, for the interruptions caused by his service with the army were not counted against him. In May, 1751, just before he set out for Valconda, he was graded a Junior Merchant and granted a salary of £30 a year, and for the first time was accorded that privilege for which the heart of every trader in the East India service yearned—the right to trade privately. At hand at last was the opportunity for which Clive had waited, the opportunity of making a fortune and then returning to England. He had the ability, zeal and astuteness for mercantile success. Already he had begun to amass money by embarking on a venture with Robert

Orme, whom he had met in Calcutta. The concern was known as Robert Orme & Clive, and conducted a brisk coastal trade between the Coromandel coast and Bengal. His commissariat contracts also proved lucrative. Their yield was abundantly gratifying. When given the choice two years earlier, Clive had refused to remain in the army because he saw how much more alluring were the rewards of commerce. But now, faced with a shortage of officers, aware of the incompetence of Gingen, Clive brushed aside all these earlier considerations and applied again for a commission. Perhaps he saw a fresh opportunity, with prizes equally bright and abundant as those within the commercial grasp. Returning from the brush with death in his encounter with the fierce polygars, his soul seemed to hunger again for adventure. He applied for permission to rejoin the army 'without any consideration of pay'. His application was accepted. He was given the brevet rank of Captain.

CHAPTER X

Success at Last

I

AFTER frenzied endeavours at scraping together some sort of army, Captain Clive left for Trichinopoly with a force consisting of only 150 men and one small field gun.

He entered the fortress after a sharp encounter with a detachment of the besieging force, and, after surveying the situation, decided and contrived to leave again. He returned to Fort St. David with a new and bold line of strategy. More than ever he was convinced now that our tactics were ill-judged and unlikely to prove successful. The more we swelled the besieged horde the more acute would be the problem of their food. Far better, it seemed to him, to distract the enemy and draw them off in another direction.

Clive was blest with a shrewdness of mind derived from generations of lawyers. He was alive to every turn of opportunity. India had been rich in lessons of strategy and subterfuge. He saw now what the assembled councils had failed to perceive, what the seasoned leaders had been unable to discern. He suggested an attack on Arcot, the capital of the Carnatic, which could not, he calculated, have been left well defended in view of the heavy concentration of enemy troops at Trichinopoly.

The Governor of Fort St. David, Mr. Saunders, saw the wisdom of this plan; he also saw difficulties. It would be an overt act of hostility against the ruler to whom the English paid rent and allegiance for their coastal settlements. Until the rival, pent up in Trichinopoly, was victorious, the present ruler remained master. Dared the English challenge him openly, for at Trichinopoly they maintained the fiction that they were acting as hirelings? Clive's was a bold plan and the risks were great. For one thing we had no troops other than the small garrisons at Madras and Fort St. David, and we had no leaders. Clive himself, barely twenty-six, was only yesterday a civilian. Dared we venture?

The Governor dared—and he entrusted Clive with the task of putting his plan into operation. The two settlements could not be

stripped completely, but he detached more than half the garrisons to serve under Clive. The entire force comprised no more than 500 men, the majority of them natives. There were eight officers, six of whom had never been in action. With this small, eager band Clive set out for Arcot.

Chunda's capital was actually defended by over a thousand men. Clive learned of this after he had been three days on the march, but he went on unconcerned. Overtaken by a violent thunderstorm, buffeted by torrential tropical rain that drove the peasants into the crude shelter of their huts, dazzled by terrifying flashes of lightning that made women scream and men pray, Clive still marched on, fearless, unshaken, unswerving. On towards Arcot.

And when this was described to the thousand men within the stout security of their fort, they were seized with a queer panic. They refused to face the strange white devils who had defied and survived the wrath of heaven. Advancing upon them, they felt, were not human beings but creatures from another world. And in their panic they fled from the fort, abandoning munitions, stores, money, everything.

Clive, who had come expecting a fierce struggle with the odds so heavily against him, found a deserted fort. It was a walk-over victory. He strode in and took possession of the town. Arcot was won without a shot being fired. The capital of the enemy was in the unchallenged possession of the English.

Clive's first manœuvre ended in a battle that was never fought.

2

But if Arcot was won it had still to be held. Clive realized that the enemy, when their panic had subsided, might return to contest his possession of the town. So, with foresight, he prepared for this eventuality. He treated the townsmen of Arcot with consideration and kindness. The money found in the fort was restored to the merchants who had placed it there for safety. There was no looting. Everything bought was promptly paid for. He stocked the fort with provisions and munitions in readiness for a long siege. Then he set out after the enemy to harass them while they were still in the grip of panic.

He found them at a fort six miles from the town. As he approached

they swung a field-piece on him and killed a camel. When he came nearer, they turned and fled again.

Two days later Clive went after them once more and drove them from their new resting place; but this time, with returning composure, they took refuge in a dry lake, and, from this shelter, tore large gaps in our ranks.

But Clive's strategy came again to the rescue. He attacked the lake from two sides and the enemy, fearing they would be surrounded and trapped, scurried out of sight.

In all these early encounters Clive showed that, though young and inexperienced, he was equal to every emergency, which, after all, is all that good generalship comprises. When the enemy, their numbers augmented, approached Arcot more confidently, Clive surprised them in camp at two o'clock in the morning and scattered them, confused and shrieking. He had that rare quality that only the greatest leaders possess, that blend of dauntlessness with imagination that Napoleon was to have later.

Just as Clive had anticipated, his diversion at Arcot led to a large detachment of the enemy's troops being withdrawn from Trichinopoly. Chunda Sahib could not leave the capital of the Carnatic in the possession of his rival's ally. The recovery of Arcot had become of more moment than the capture of Trichinopoly.

Chunda's son Rajah Sahib was despatched to Arcot with an army of over 7,000 men. They were accompanied by 150 French soldiers from Pondicherry.

Clive, whose resources were unequal to meeting such a large army in the open, allowed them to swarm into the city. Rajah Sahib installed himself in the palace of the Nawab. Clive still held the fort, resolute, defiant.

3

The next day he brought his troops out of the fort and made a dash along parallel streets for the Nawab's palace. Had the two sections reached their destination simultaneously all might have been well. But one party was intercepted and delayed, while the men Clive was himself leading encountered the French, who were armed with four field-pieces.

Now, within thirty yards of each other, English and French,

officially at peace, confront one another, their muskets loaded, their guns trained.

Shots are exchanged. The fire of the English suddenly becomes so intense that the French abandon their guns and escape into the palace. Clive instantly makes a dash for the French guns, but the native troops of the enemy are by now at all the windows, raining death on Clive's men.

It is Clive's turn to seek shelter. He rushes his men into a large *choultry*,¹ unwall'd towards the street, and, his troops secure, he orders his artillery to load, fire their field-pieces, and then dash back to shelter. In this way, sheltering between shots, moving the guns a little each time, Clive hopes to regain the fort. But the enemy fire has become too hot. From every window the muskets are blazing. The loss of life is severe. A great many Europeans have fallen.

Now Clive, who has been dashing recklessly in and out of the shelter, is picked out by the musket of a native soldier. The man is at a lower window. He aims with care, his hand is steady. His finger presses upon the trigger.

Simultaneously Lieutenant Trenwith, who was crouching within arm's reach, strikes aside the musket. The bullet goes wide, but the native, grinning fiercely at his new target, shoots the young lieutenant instead.

Clive's life is saved.

Again the escape was miraculous. Some said he possessed a charmed life. But the luck of survival is essential to the attainment of fame; for genius, destroyed without opportunity, as it often is, remains unnoticed and unsung.

4

For fifty tense, anxious days and nights Clive's possession of the fort at Arcot was challenged. His garrison, small at the start, had been considerably reduced by sickness and death. They had access only to the rations available in the fort, for, situated in the heart of a town occupied by the enemy, it was impossible to obtain further supplies from the bazaars.

The days passed. Food was running short. The small, sickly garrison grew hungry. They were an assorted band—some mercenaries, others gleanings of the press gangs, a few volunteers from our settlements. There were also two hundred Indian soldiers in English pay.

¹A shelter for travellers.

Far from descending to base quarrels over their scant rations, they were buoyed up by Clive's fine leadership and infused with the resolve to win. They fought back despair. Towards each other they betrayed a rare and touching gallantry. The sepoys, men of another race, hired to fight their own kind, went *salaaming* to Clive, to beg that the food that remained may be given entirely to the English, who were far less able than they to stand the rigours of the climate. For themselves, they said, it would be sufficient if they received just the water in which the rice had been cooked. On this thin gruel they fought valiantly side by side with the English, repelling attack and intrigue.

Rajah Sahib, living in luxury in his magnificent palace, tried every ruse to induce Clive to capitulate. He offered him vast sums of money in bribes. He sought to negotiate. He threatened to descend with his entire force upon the fort and destroy them all. But Clive remained unmoved. The bribes he rejected with scorn. The threats he answered with haughtiness. "Your father is a usurper," he declared, "and your army is a rabble. You will do well if you think twice before you send such poltroons into a breach defended by English soldiers."

But behind the scenes, Clive was begging for help from Madras and Fort St. David. He thought of the Mahrattas and sought even their aid. They promised to come. But, ever active, ever resourceful, Clive was not content to rely upon promises. Enfeebled in health, still he moved feverishly about the fort, strengthening its defences. In order to strike awe in the palace, he had one of his heavy guns raised to the loftiest tower of the fort, upon which a still loftier mound had been reared in readiness. From this height Clive was able to train his gun on the palace, and every day, when the enemy officers assembled for instructions from Rajah Sahib, the cannon boomed and landed an iron ball weighing seventy-two pounds on their roof. For four days Clive made them tremble at the roar of this cannon—and then, just as it was being fired, the gun burst.

Relief from the coast failed to reach the beleaguered garrison, and Rajah Sahib, anxious to destroy Clive's handful before the advent of the Mahrattas, decided to attack at the festival of the Mohorrum. Upon that day the religious fervour of the Mahommedans rouses them to acts of unprecedented violence against the infidel. This is regarded as the surest path to salvation. Reinforcing this with the still more potent stimulus of *bhang*,¹ Rajah Sahib began his onslaught upon

¹A drug made from Indian hemp.

the fort. Elephants, their skulls fitted with large iron plates, were used as battering rams. But at the first shots from the English the elephants turned and fled, trampling down their own men.

Recovering themselves, once again the enemy swept forward. Within the fort were only two hundred active fighters; against them were ranged twelve thousand. Clive, asleep when the attack began, rushed to and fro, issuing orders, inspiring confidence, trying to do everything himself. He noticed that seventy of the enemy were half-way across the moat on a raft. Our guns, though trained on them, were firing wide. He took one of the guns himself, and with three or four shots sank the raft. Most of those on it were drowned; the rest swam back.

The contest raged on. Within an hour the enemy had lost four hundred killed and wounded. Of Clive's brave band only four were killed and two injured. Rajah Sahib then decided to retire. After an intermittent fire carried half into the night, there was a sudden silence. Clive learned that he had been left in undisputed possession of both the fort and the town.

Arcot had been won and held.

5

Four days later Captain Kilpatrick arrived with help from the coast. Leaving this officer in charge of Arcot, Clive set out with a thousand men in quest of the enemy. He was joined belatedly by the Mahrattas.

He found Rajah Sahib and the French with a vast army, far outnumbering his own, drawn up for battle near Arni. The engagement was swift and the defeat he inflicted decisive. So impressed was the governor of Arni fort with Clive's success that he presented him with an elephant 'as a compliment of submission'.

Clive then returned to Fort St. David. A few weeks later, the enemy, having been bold enough to approach Madras and plunder the country houses of the merchants, Clive set out again with a small detachment. Seventeen miles from Madras he found them, with a force three times as numerous as his own, and in a position of distinct advantage near the village of Kaveripak.

Battle he knew was inevitable. Success seemed impossible. But with his usual daring Clive defied the odds and won. In this night

engagement, by an amazing display of generalship, reconnoitring with skill, attacking with precision and judgment, Clive took the French in the rear and routed them. It was the most dexterous success so far of his military career. Its effect was electrical. Coming after his magnificent stand at Arcot, it swayed the balance of prestige definitely from the French to the English. And in order to give this due emphasis Clive, marching back to Fort St. David, paused at the Town of the Victory of Dupleix and destroyed it. The symbol of what had been achieved by France in India was left by Clive in a heap of ruins.

CHAPTER XI

Glory

I

CLIVE was triumphant. Though a junior officer, only a few months in the army, he was now placed in supreme command of the force that was being got together for the relief of Trichinopoly. Mahommed Ali, from his fortress in that town, styled Clive, while he awaited his coming, 'Sabut Jung', the Valiant in War, a title by which he was known in India for ever after. The Mahrattas, valiant fighters themselves, hailed him. Having refused before to assist us at Trichinopoly, they declared their readiness now to help Clive. The men who fought under him, they said, were of a different stamp from those who were with Gingen at Trichinopoly. There were, of course, acute evidences of jealousy against Clive among the officers in our army. They rejoiced when, just as Clive's preparations were complete and the expedition on the eve of departure, Major Lawrence returned unexpectedly with the authority of Commander-in-Chief over all the English forces. It meant the surrender by Clive of the supreme command. It must have been a moment of cruel disappointment, relieved in a measure by the thought that it was to Lawrence's friendly encouragement in the past that he owed so much. Lawrence's character was untainted by jealousies. He recognized merit where he found it, and rendered it due reward. Of Clive's earlier successes he said, brushing aside the pettiness of others: "Some people are pleased to term Captain Clive fortunate and lucky; but, in my opinion, from the knowledge I have of the gentleman, he deserved and might expect from his conduct everything as it fell out—a man of an undaunted resolution, of a cool temper, and of a presence of mind which never left him in the greatest danger—born a soldier; for without a military education of any sort, or much conversing with any of the profession, from his judgment and good sense, he led on an army like an experienced officer and a brave soldier, with a prudence that certainly warranted success."

Lawrence appointed Clive his second in command on this expedition. He was eager to avail himself of Clive's counsel and to provide him with further opportunities for distinction.

On the 17th of March, 1752, Lawrence and Clive set out to relieve Trichinopoly. The enemy was still present in considerable numbers: Chunda Sahib with an army of fifty thousand men, apart from the customary camp followers who could be counted by the hundred thousand; the French with a strong European force and a great many heavy guns under the command of a young officer of promise named Law, who had been responsible for the capture of Lawrence at Pondicherry. This rugged, hard-eyed officer's promise never matured. Unlike his celebrated Scottish uncle, Law of Lauriston, who made opportunities for his ambitions, the younger man was presented with opportunities of which he made nothing. Here before Trichinopoly he had been waiting for months, missing opportunities that one less cautious would have converted long before into a victory. The incurable caution was no doubt prompted by the reckless incaution of his uncle, which had led to nothing but disaster; for Law of Lauriston was responsible for those grandiose schemes of finance, investment and expansion that brought about the ruin of a generation and were the nightmare of France for a century. In his heyday he had hobnobbed with the Regent of France, the Duc d'Orléans, while his children played with the boy king, Louis the Fifteenth. Those were days of wild speculation when coachmen and cooks became millionaires by the evening and vast Parisian throngs jostled each other in the narrow Rue Quincampoix, fighting for the purchase of stock in what turned out to be the Mississippi bubble. A little hunchback amassed a speedy fortune here by merely letting men in a hurry use his hump as a desk on which to sign papers. The younger Law had been told how a few months later his uncle's coach was attacked in the streets by menacing crowds howling for the blood of the 'Robber'. Any wonder that the youth was cautious and hesitant.

While he hesitated Clive's genius reshaped the position before Trichinopoly. He suggested to Lawrence that the relieving force should be divided into two sections—one to proceed towards Trichinopoly and the other to cut off the retreat of the French. Lawrence promptly adopted the plan. Himself a soldier of wide experience, he was able to discern the extraordinary military talent that Clive seemed to possess.

To Clive was entrusted, as at Arcot, the operation of his plan. He

marched with his detachment and flung it across the line of communication between Law and Dupleix.

3

Clive took up his position seven miles from Law. He occupied two Hindu temples situated on opposite sides of the main road, which he blocked with defensive works. Within a few days he learned that Dupleix, exasperated by Law's inactivity, had despatched an aged and ailing officer to replace him.

D'Auteuil set out from Pondicherry with considerable reinforcements; and Clive, to forestall a detour, hurried down to meet him. But the Frenchman shirked the issue by retreating, and Clive, who had left scarcely any troops at his camp, hurried back. Law, meanwhile, had heard of Clive's departure but not of his return; and decided, an unusual course for him, upon action. He detached eighty Europeans and seven hundred sepoy and sent them to attack the small body left behind at Clive's camp.

The French detachment arrived at midnight, some hours after Clive's return. In their van were forty English deserters. Challenged by our sentries, one of the deserters, an Irishman, stepped forward and declared that they had been sent by Major Lawrence to reinforce Clive. Hearing English voices and knowing that a detachment from Lawrence was expected, the sentries admitted the enemy without troubling about the password. Clive, very tired after his long and fruitless marches, lay asleep at the time.

The enemy, having penetrated far enough into the camp, began to fire their muskets. One of these shots burst into the shelter in which Clive lay. It shattered a box at his feet, and killed a native servant asleep by his side. Clive himself was unhurt.

He started from his sleep, puzzled. Why were his men firing? Was it panic? The approach of the enemy? Mutiny? The thought that the enemy were in the very heart of his encampment did not enter into his speculations, for with the many sentries and guards he had posted that was inconceivable.

Clive dashed out in his night-shirt. He found some sepoy engaged in firing, and assuming them to be his men, commanded them to stop. The order unheeded, he struck one of them. At this, one of the others rushed upon him and slashed him with a knife in two places.

Incensed by the insubordination, Clive chased the man right across the camp until, to his dismay, he found himself surrounded by Frenchmen. In a flash the entire position became clear. He realized what had happened and his mind leapt to a speedy solution. Calm, composed, Clive pretended that he had really come to offer them terms. He explained that the smaller temple, of which they seemed to be in possession, was completely surrounded by his army, which in the darkness they could not see. He warned them that unless they surrendered immediately they would all be cut to pieces. Clive's tone was impressive and convincing. Some of the Frenchmen surrendered. The others ran into the temple to inform the rest of their plight.

Clive then returned to his own end of the camp assembled his men and marched them on the temple. He tried to storm the place, but found the entrance too narrow. The fight raged desperately for some time. At daybreak the French tried to rush out, but the thirteen who came through the porch were all shot dead. Clive, who had been but recently slashed with a knife, was limp now with loss of blood. He put his arms around the shoulders of two sergeants, and went to the enemy's porch to offer them terms for their surrender.

He was met by one of the English deserters, an officer. The man hurled foul abuse at Clive and threatened to shoot him. But Clive remained unmoved. The officer raised his musket and fired twice. He missed Clive, but both the sergeants on whom Clive was leaning were killed.

Fearing a massacre would follow, the French instantly surrendered. The native troops who had come into the camp with them bolted. But our Mahratta allies, in camp with Clive here at Samiavoram, chased these sepoys and put them all to death. Not one of the seven hundred was ever seen alive again.

History can scarce provide a parallel to the incidents of this extraordinary night. Through all its varying phases Clive showed, besides great courage, a nimbleness of mind that in itself deserved to have success. But good fortune aided him too. It preserved him miraculously three times from death. And so what seemed very near to being a rout of the English became in fact a victory.

Clive's next objective was Pitchendah, where the French had a detachment and Chunda his whole army. By bombarding this vast encampment Clive caused such a panic among the women and tradesmen that the air was rent with their screams, with the trumpeting of terrified elephants and the cry of camels. After a time, unable to

stand it any longer, Chunda's army sent a message to Clive offering him their services.

It was the beginning of the end at Trichinopoly. A few days later d'Auteuil was defeated by Clive and surrendered with his entire force. Only Law remained now. Major Lawrence, 'the old gentleman', as Clive affectionately called him, offered Law terms, but they were rejected. In his obstinacy Law even refused to accept d'Auteuil's defeat. That aged, gouty Frenchman was then led before the young officer. Seeing the man who had been selected to replace him a prisoner, Law surrendered. It was a bitter blow to the ambitions and pride of Dupleix.

The blow to Chunda Sahib, but recently acclaimed Nawab of the Carnatic amid such rejoicings at Pondicherry, was equally severe. After the surrender of his troops he tried to escape through the lines of our allies. He bribed the Mahratta commander of the Tanjore army and promised an even larger sum if he reached safety. The man agreed to assist, but instead he seized Chunda and put him in irons. On learning of his capture, the rest of our allies began squabbling to secure him. But the man who had accepted Chunda's bribe would not part with his captive. He summoned his executioner and sent him to dispose of Chunda.

Chunda, an old man now, was lying on the ground, infirm, ill, too weak to raise his head when the executioner strode into the room. Blanching at the sight of the axe, the proud old man begged to be allowed to see the Mahratta commander as he had a matter of great importance to communicate. But Chunda's secret went with him to his grave. The executioner bent over him and, drawing a knife from his belt, stabbed Chunda through the heart. Then with a swoop of his axe he struck off the dead man's head.

This trophy was despatched with the Mahratta commander's compliments to Mahommed Ali, our ally, the man we had just made Nawab of the Carnatic. By an odd coincidence, or, as the Mahommedans termed it, by the design of Allah, Chunda met his fate at the very place where, sixteen years before, he had palmed off a stone for the Koran.

CHAPTER XII

Home

I

CLIVE, his health affected by the strain of climate and campaigning, returned to Madras, now again the seat of Government. Lawrence remained in the field, trying to pacify our squabbling allies and to oust the French from their remaining strongholds.

Dupleix, with astounding resilience, produced a new card from up his sleeve. He said he had been appointed Nawab of all Southern India by the new Nizam, Salabut Jung. Chunda was merely his deputy he declared; so now, upon Chunda's death, he appointed Chunda's son, Rajah Sahib, Nawab of the Carnatic. Dupleix held an impressive durbar, with full oriental magnificence. He summoned it as the 'Viceroy of the Grand Moghul', and produced an authority from the Emperor which he had forged. He appeared dressed in the gold spangles of Moghul impressiveness. But it was of no use.

In fact, only two strongholds of any consequence remained in the hands of the French—the fortresses of Chingleput and Covelong, both near enough to Madras to be a danger. Clive, ill though he was, set out with some newly arrived recruits, men who had been carried out of taverns in England and shipped off before the first blink of sobriety. They proved contemptible material. At the sound of the first shots from their own side a great many of them turned and fled. On another occasion one was found crouching terrified at the bottom of a well. But Clive drilled and disciplined them. By his own brave example, by exposing himself constantly to danger, he at length succeeded in shaming them out of their panic. And he led them to victory. Both fortresses surrendered, and Clive returned, again triumphant, to Madras. Clive's 'glorious campaign', as the Governor termed it, had ended.

2

October! The monsoon has broken over Madras and has greyed skies that glowed white in the noonday sun for nine months of the

year. The wind whistles, sharpening the angle of the rain, which stipples the vistas. Walls are moist, ceilings leak. Tables and chairs are clammy to the touch.

Within a white villa, its verandas swept by rain, but behind doors fastened and screened against the weather, a girl of seventeen sits before a harpsichord, her hands straying gently across the keys.

Her hair hangs in pale ringlets about her ears. Her small, slight figure, compressed within the still narrower limits of the corsage, is poised in fragile grace above the hooped glory of her pink silk dress. Her voice is soft and low. She is alone, diverting the idle evening.

In her work-box, to which she turns when she has wearied of singing, there is a letter, which she has read a dozen times already. The writing is neat, though the spelling is indifferent and the punctuation neglected. But there is in it strength and impetuosity—the strength of love, the impetuosity of the lover. It may lack the elegant raptures of poesy, but it has a sincerity and an emotion that make the pulses quicken. A pink flush, as if mirroring the silk of her dress, rises to the girl's pale cheeks. It is the flush of happiness, of joy. And as she comes to the signature, she glances furtively about her to make sure she is unobserved before she raises it to her lips, kissing that little word 'Bob'.

Bob, her brother's best friend and her betrothed, though four months ago they had not even seen each other. But Clive fell in love with Margaret Maskelyne years before he met her. His friendship with her brother Edmund, cemented by their flight in disguise from this very town, had strengthened through the years into affection; and then one day Clive caught a glimpse of a fascinating miniature on Edmund's table. It was the picture of a girl of thirteen or so with a high forehead, a thin, delicate mouth, narrow, heavily lashed eyes, and a small, pointed nose. Picking it up, his eyes stressing that more than interest in his voice, he asked about her.

At once, quite impulsively as it appeared, Clive said: "Ask her to come here. There is no one I would more like to marry." Edmund was taken aback, but Clive assured him he was serious. He asked Edmund to read to him some of the letters he had from her. Clive was enthralled. At her brother's urging the girl came. She arrived in June, a few weeks after Clive returned triumphant from Samiavoram with a deep scar to mark that night of adventure. "Don't worry," Major Lawrence told him; "if your wounds spoil the beauty of your face they raise your fame in having served your country when you got them."

Margaret Maskelyne was not quite seventeen. Well-born, well-educated, attractive, she had many links with India, with one of which Clive had come in contact even before he met her brother Edmund.

That was on a dark December morning in London when Clive was himself seventeen. With a dozen other boys of his years he waited in a little front room in the offices of the East India Company. A ballot was in progress for the appointment of writers to India. They waited with boyish restlessness, gazing out into the narrow gloom of Leadenhall Street. Presently the door opened and an attendant read out the names of seven boys, Clive's among them—the seven who had been successful in the ballot. Of the successful was John Walsh, a cousin of Margaret's. She was herself only seven at the time. By virtue of this relationship Walsh in after years became Clive's secretary and his delegate on many important missions.

Margaret's father worked for the Duke of Newcastle in Whitehall, a link that Clive was to find useful later. An uncle was in the service of the East India Company in Sumatra, and two aunts had married in India—one in Madras, the other in Calcutta. From a younger brother Nevil, who became Astronomer Royal, the family of illusionists was to spring.

With Miss Maskelyne there arrived in Madras ten young ladies, and the men in the settlement, as may be imagined, were agog with interest. Friends chaffed Clive. They wondered at the effect these beauties would have on him, and he, the young hero of India, on these beautiful women. But Clive remained faithful to his promise. Without any of the graces of the lover, with neither looks, nor polite airs, nor caressing subtleties of address, he just spoke and wrote as he felt. Margaret was drawn to him by his directness and his daring, the fire that flared in the depths of his brown eyes, the determined thrust of his under-lip, the unspoken cynicism of his half-twisted smile. To her he was tender and devoted. In the letter she read again and again, he said he would be home soon from the last of his expeditions. He said nothing of his great victories at Chingleput and Covelong. But she had been told of them already by others.

3

In the manor house of the small, impoverished estate at Styche, the irritable lawyer who had once hoped his first-born would make

a success of the calling at which he had himself failed, sat in ecstatic contemplation, a quill poised reflectively in his hand.

It was ten years since, appalled at the thought that the boy was a dunderhead, incapable of achieving anything in life, he had shipped him off to Madras. The pen is poised now not in contemplation of that, for ten years is a long time in the life of an irascible father who wishes to forget. All he is contemplating now is the talk of his neighbours, and his eyes are bright with pleasure as their voices ring again in memory, uttering his boy's praises.

He is recalling these praises, setting them down for friends. He wants to tell of Bob's triumph to everyone. He feels pent up in this aloof country place. In London, he knows, they are already talking of his son. The news-sheets are filled with accounts of his victories.

So Richard Clive hurries to London. He moves about excitedly. He could not be more excited had he achieved all these triumphs himself. He chortles when he finds that the rascally, nincompoop Bob is now being compared with the bravest military leaders of the past. He realizes, as he himself puts it, that the boy had some sense in him after all. Soon he dashes off to see the directors of the East India Company, for he has heard that they intend to honour his son. They cannot tell him how, for they have not yet made up their minds. But he learns that at a public dinner they have already drunk his boy's health, lauding him as 'General' Clive!

His wife is calmer. There is no outward ostentation, but a deep emotion such as a mother must feel. Her first-born has always been her favourite, and the son's tenderness for her has mellowed through the years of exile. At the plaudits that are bestowed upon her boy she sways a little with motherly pride. But his health and safety engage her more earnest concern. She writes:

Dear Son,

I cannot express the joy yours to your father gave me. Your brave conduct, and success which Providence has blessed you with, is the talk and wonder of the public, the great joy and satisfaction of your friends; but more particularly so to me, as it gives me hope of seeing you much sooner than I could possibly have expected. I find some of your friends wish your longer stay in India; but I earnestly entreat you will let no motive induce you, except your honour and the peace of the country require it.

Your relations are all well; four of your sisters are with me; the youngest and your two brothers are at school; your cousin Ben has no employ; he is

only on half-pay as a lieutenant, lives with his father, and, I believe, wishes himself with you. We are removed to a large house in Swithin's Lane, near the post house, and hope to see you in it. May a kind Providence attend and bless you, and bring you safe to your native country, is the most sincere wish and prayer of

*Your ever affectionate mother,
Reb. Clive.*

4

Neither this tender, solicitous note from his mother, nor one from his father urging him "to increase your fortune now that your conduct and bravery has become the public talk of the nation", reached Clive.

He returned from his final expedition worn out. His early fevers and fits, which had visited him recurrently since that crisis of childhood, returned. Already twice since his coming to India this fever had brought him very near to death. It was obvious to all his friends that Clive could not stay in the country much longer. He needed a rest and a change. But nobly he insisted on carrying on. He took on again the lighter duties of chief of the commissariat, which was a relief from campaigning, but now he was planning to set out once more with the troops, for he realized that so long as Dupleix's nominee remained Nizam of the Deccan his work was only half-done.

But it was not to be yet. His health would not permit his remaining in the country. Early in February 1753, the Governor and Council gave Clive leave of absence and a passage to England. Five days later, in the picturesque little church in the fort, Clive was married to Margaret Maskelyne. The following month they sailed for England.

Clive was now not only a great soldier, but rich. In the last two or three years he had amassed a fortune of £50,000. Some of this money he had sent home in diamonds, for bills of exchange were not easy to obtain for large sums; the rest he left in the country with Mr. Levi Moses to "be let out if possible on good security, till another opportunity of investing it offers".

He left amid adulatory tributes from the settlement, but he was a little peeved that no official note of praise or gratitude was sent him. Already he had encountered a great deal of jealousy and scorn. "The world we live in," the elderly Major Lawrence consoled him, "abounds with snarlers. However, let them snarl on since they can't bite. You

are right in making it a subject of mirth." But Clive was not consoled. "I think," he confessed to Lawrence, "in justice to the military in general, I cannot leave this coast without leaving a paper behind me representing the little notice taken of people of our profession. I hope the world will not accuse me of vanity or be of opinion that I think too highly of my own successes as I seldom or ever opened my lips upon the subject. All that I ever expected was a letter of thanks and that I am informed is usual upon such occasions. A few days ago the Governor sent for me and informed me the Nabob¹ had made me a present of forty thousand rupees. I sent a note for the purpose, but by inquiries I have made since can learn nothing further."

In the same ship with Captain and Mrs. Clive sailed Robert Orme, who had been associated in business with Clive in Calcutta and had lately been transferred to Madras. He made elaborate notes of all Clive told him for the history he had already begun of Clive's campaigns. When the ship called at St. Helena, Clive and Orme went ashore together to view the place. It was sixty-two years before Napoleon was sent there to his exile and his death.

¹Old form of Nawab.

CHAPTER XIII

A Bid for Parliament

I

WHAT a difference between the departure and the home-coming. When the seventeen-year-old boy left England to seek what fate had to offer in India, his wildest hopes, his most arrogant ambitions could not have envisaged a homecoming such as he was destined to receive within ten years.

The Press was full of eulogies. He was acclaimed by an enthusiastic populace. He was dined and fêted. He was courted by society and showered with invitations to the homes of the mightiest. Clive found himself the idol of the gay world—and it pleased and fascinated him. It was the world of Beau Nash, of Peg Woffington, and of David Garrick, who started as a wine merchant and had become the most talked-of actor in town. Dr. Johnson, busy on his dictionary, convulsively grimaced and muttered in Gough Square, swayed and puffed along Fleet Street in ragged clothes and torn shoes, and dined in subterranean cookshops where one wiped one's greasy hands on the back of a Newfoundland dog. Kitty Clive, the dark-eyed Irish actress who had married a cousin of Clive's, was the rage of Drury Lane. Fielding and Richardson were adding fresh leaves to laurels already won. The Duke of Cumberland, King George the Second's younger son, was fat and half-blind at the early age of thirty-two. He was savage in temper, cruel, and as reckless a libertine as the most licentious Nawab in India. Only recently his henchmen had dragged to him at Windsor a girl he desired; unluckily, she refused the hundred pounds he offered for her virtue and was made to walk penniless all the way back to London. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, chief of the blue-stockings, went about in an old gaping wrapper which revealed her canvas petticoat; her hair greasy and uncombed; her face covered with cheap white paint "that you would not use to wash a chimney."¹ The striking beauty of the two Miss Gunnings was the theme of every discourse. Within a brief space of these poor Irish girls coming to London with their mother, each had married into the nobility: one to an impatient Duke at midnight in Keith's notorious chapel in Mayfair

¹Horace Walpole.

with a bed-curtain ring as her wedding-ring; the other to an Earl who had wooed the sister but had to take what was left. Crowds pursued them everywhere. They were mobbed in the park and had to be provided with a military escort for their own safety. When they travelled hundreds sat up all night on the lonely country roads just to see them flash past in a post-chaise. Elizabeth Chudleigh, more daring than beautiful, her charm encroached upon by advancing maturity, walked the Mall in clothes that made her appear almost nude and so affected the ageing passions of our seventy-year-old King, that George the Second installed her as his mistress and left her at his death for peers to quarrel over.

The smart set gambled heavily and lolled about drunk at the opera. Peers stooped to such jests as spitting into the hats of their friends. Duels were fought every day. Dandies affected long curls and clouded canes. Ranelagh, opened not long before Clive had sailed for India, and Vauxhall were the resorts of the gay. The two Wesleys and Whitfield were preaching Methodism with vigour and gaining converts even in Mayfair. Handel, nearly seventy and blind, no longer composed but played his earlier oratorios at concerts. Joshua Reynolds, not yet thirty, but returned deaf from his recent travels, was winning fame with portraits painted at ten guineas a time in his studio near Slaughter's Coffee House in St. Martin's Lane, then essentially an artistic quarter. Soon all the rich men from India were to line up for his services. Gainsborough, barely twenty-six, was painting landscapes in Suffolk. Hogarth still intrigued the world with his engravings.

It was the England of exquisite snuff-boxes and delicately painted sedan chairs; of bear gardens, cock-pits and stately minuets; of highwaymen who held up Cabinet Ministers at Hounslow and hangmen who often became public heroes, until they executed children for stealing apples and imbeciles for cutting purses; of lovely women in hoops and beauty patches; of pillories gaped at by throngs in public squares: an England of fans and screens and sponging houses; of Grub Street where poets starved in back alleys and died in cock-lofts. A sophisticated England that wanted its Shakespeare served in modern dress. Just before Clive's return Lord Chesterfield, better known today for the letters he wrote his son, startled England by altering the calendar. He moved the New Year from March 25th to January 1st and tore eleven days out of the month of September, thus bringing our reckoning into line with Europe's, where Pope Gregory, allowing for an annual error of hours, had made a similar adjustment nearly

two hundred years before, an adjustment that, because we no longer believed in Popes, we had refused to adopt. Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act, which swept away the scandal of the Fleet weddings by insisting on the banns being published for three Sundays in the parish church, was still denounced by the polite world who abhorred the idea of publicity. "Oh! What a *gauntlet* for a woman of delicacy to run!"

On the Continent Frederic the Second of Prussia, not yet forty, had already earned by the conscienceless exercise of his ambitions a claim to that greatness that historians conferred to distinguish him from his obscure ancestors. He was the most powerful and the most discussed king in Europe. At Potsdam he plagued his guests with contemptible economies and puerile practical jokes. He soiled the fine brocades and lace of his courtiers by squirting oil at them and laughed incontinently at their discomfiture. He cut down Voltaire's ration of chocolate and sugar, a humiliation which the French cynic avenged by stealing the wax tapers out of the royal candlesticks. In America the descendants of the Puritan Pilgrim Fathers in Massachusetts, the Quakers in Pennsylvania, and the Catholics in Maryland, because they were English, sank their differences and combined to fight the French endeavours to drift southward from their poverty-stricken settlements in Canada.

2

Clive moved about this gay world with all the magnificence of a Nawab. He indulged in pomp and ostentation. He wanted to dazzle and eclipse the noblest lords and ladies. He lived in Queen's Square adjoining St. James's Park, kept saddle horses, and rode in a costly carriage, attended by footmen in flashing liveries. The black servant he had brought home was tricked out in a bob wig. Clive got on terms of friendship with Henry Fox, later the first Lord Holland; with Lord Sandwich, young, handsome, bright-eyed, with morals that would not bear inquiry: it was he who gave his name to our sandwich, for, unable to stop gambling even for meals, he had meat brought between slices of bread to the tables; with Murray who was to be England's famous Chief Justice, Lord Mansfield; and with the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose son caused a great deal of paternal embarrassment by publishing obscene verses.

But the gay world was a little contemptuous of Clive's ostentation. It was too exotic, too alien: soon it became offensive. Without rank,

without wit, without looks, without any of the graces that endowed the beaux of that age with their visas to popularity, Clive could not hope, though he aspired, to hold his place among them. They had raised their hero shoulder high, but they had no intention of keeping him there. Tomorrow would provide its own favourites; yesterday's must pass into oblivion. With that strategic sense of adaptability that guided him, untutored, through his Indian campaigns, Clive sought to win position by acquiring a seat in Parliament. The electorate had not yet been reformed and rotten boroughs were within the influence or purchase of most people. And although his fortune had been depleted by his ostentation, Clive was prepared to pay for this new privilege.

Yet Clive thought not of himself alone in his good fortune. Towards his relatives and friends his generosity was embarrassing. He found his father plunged deeply in debt. The large house the elder Clive had taken for the family in London was quite beyond his means. The ancestral estate at Styche had been mortgaged. There was hardly a penny in his purse.

Clive readily came to his parents' rescue. He made a settlement upon them that assured an income of £500 a year for the rest of their lives. He freed Styche of debt by acquiring it himself, and installed there an elderly uncle. He made liberal gifts to his sisters, his friends and even to his wife's most distant relatives. His generosity expressed itself in still another manner. The directors of the East India Company, appreciative of the monetary advantages to them from Clive's successes in India, resolved to honour him by presenting publicly a sword set with diamonds. It was but a mark, they said, "of their sense of his singular services". It was a handsome tribute. The thanks he had expected, though belated, were tendered by those even more exalted than the Governor and Council of Madras.

But Clive graciously declined the gift. He said he could not accept the sword unless a similar token was presented to his superior officer, Major Lawrence. It was done. A more magnificently jewelled sword was bought by the directors for Lawrence in order that Clive might be persuaded to accept their offering.

3

Learning of Clive's desire for a seat in Parliament and assured of his means, Lord Sandwich put him up for the borough of St. Michael in Cornwall. Clive was one of two Sandwich candidates set up in

opposition to two sponsored by the Prime Minister, the powerful Duke of Newcastle.

The election proved very costly. It was an age when nothing could be achieved at the polls save by corruption; when candidates, sharing the excessive hospitality provided for the electors, sometimes died of over-eating; when in a small borough of only thirteen electors it was possible for the odd man to obtain a small fortune for his casting vote; when men of influence let smugglers out of gaols and drove them to the booths; when even the Archbishop of Canterbury was approached with a bribe so that pressure might be put by him upon his clergy. It cost Clive almost all the money he had, but he attained his object. He was returned at the head of the poll.

Clive was now confronted with the amazing spectacle of a Prime Minister despised and detested by his own Secretary for War—Henry Fox, who had stood grimly behind Sandwich and Clive in arrogant defiance of Newcastle. It was inevitable therefore that the election should be challenged. Kindly disposed though Newcastle was to Clive's father-in-law, he lodged a petition against Clive's return.

This parliamentary venture was destined to prove as stormy as any episode in Clive's tempestuous life. The controversy raged with amazing vigour. For weeks the issue swayed, uncertain. A committee of the entire House was engaged on the inquiry and found it difficult to come to a decision. They were troubled not by rights and wrongs but by the political consequences of allowing Newcastle or Fox to triumph. Whoever won would be master of the new House. Fox battled stubbornly for Clive, and won. The Committee decided in Clive's favour.

He had triumphed. But still a new turn of events awaited him. The Committee's decision was reported to the House. The members were asked to confirm it. The Newcastle and Sandwich factions were neatly balanced. The Tories, negligible in numbers, detested both men, and it was expected that for this reason they would keep out of the dispute. But their hatred of Sandwich being greater than their contempt for Newcastle, they threw their weight into the balance, tilting the scales slightly but disastrously against Clive. When the count was known, Clive was unseated.

Political ambitions had emptied his pockets and had yielded nothing. His ostentation had provoked derision and driven him to the brink of ruin. Within eighteen months of his home-coming almost all the money he had brought back had gone.

The day following his ejection from the House he called on the East India directors and signed an agreement to return to India at an annual salary of £70. A week or two later he sailed from England.

4

But even before this the thought of returning to India had been in Clive's mind. Tempting offers 'in a civil way', as he expressed it, had been dangled before him. At the time he was not disposed to accept them. It was too soon after his homecoming and his health had not yet been wholly repaired; but, writing to friends in India, he hoped that the offers would be renewed the following year.

Clive wanted to return and complete the work he had begun. He had negatived only half Dupleix's triumphs. The French Nawab of the Carnatic had been vanquished and killed; the English nominee was now in possession of the throne. But Dupleix's protégé still smiled and smirked in Hyderabad as Nizam of the Deccan, supported by a strong French force, under Bussy's command, as much to protect him from the designs of pretenders as to secure the maintenance of French influence at his court.

Clive had heard that Dupleix, by his intrigues, had attached two of our recent allies to his cause. These and a newly recruited French army had been harassing the old Major for over a year on the scarred plains around Trichinopoly. He had also heard how, by Bussy's amazing persuasiveness, France had acquired vast tracts of territory as gifts from the Nizam. Four provinces lying to the north of Madras had passed thus into French possession, making them masters of 450 miles of seaboard along the Bay of Bengal. Clive warned the East India directors that "so long as there was one Frenchman in arms in the Deccan or in India, there could be no peace"; and added that he desired nothing better than to dispute the mastery of the Deccan with Bussy.

A plan was accordingly formed for the destruction of this French influence. The directors decided that Clive should land in Bombay, whence it would be easy for him to link up with the Mahrattas and march against Salabat Jung, the French Nizam.

A commission as Lieutenant-Colonel was obtained for Clive, but as his authority was restricted to the army of the East India Company, this was to provide considerable conflict with officers of

His Majesty's forces, lent by the Government for service in the East Indies. The directors also appointed Clive Governor of Fort St. David, the settlement into which he had fled in disguise from the French.

And so, with his wife, Clive sailed for India, leaving behind two little children, both boys, one only a few months old. There was anxiety in the parental hearts, for the younger son had been ailing. When they arrived in Bombay they learned that the child had died.

CHAPTER XIV

Pirates

I

WHILE Clive had been pondering in England how best the influence of Dupleix might be curbed, Dupleix's own country had been busy sealing his doom. For months the Eastern ships had brought to Paris nothing but news of Dupleix's reverses, which were, of course, Clive's victories. It was learned with dismay of the surrender of Law and d'Auteuil. Travellers came home with stories of Dupleix's pomp, his jewelled orders, his Moghul robes and sonorous titles and the large monetary gifts showered upon him by the Nizam and the Nawab he had elevated. At about this time too, La Bourdonnais, having served his three years in the Bastille, emerged with his 'Mémoires', exposing Dupleix as vain, ambitious and grasping. All that he had done for France was forgotten. The only concern now was that the treasury of the French East India Company was empty and trade was declining. The directors argued that a trading corporation should confine itself to trade and not engage in political manœuvring. They ordered their merchants accordingly to ignore the squabbles of native princes.

In his hour of triumph a few years ago Dupleix had been elevated by a grateful sovereign to the rank and dignity of Marquis. Now the same Louis the Fifteenth (for the French East India Company was a government concern) signed the decree of his fall. He was to be made the scapegoat of shrunken profits. A successor was appointed, a man who had been a factor in Chandernagore when Dupleix was Governor of that French settlement in Bengal. The new Governor, M. Godeheu, had instructions to arrest Dupleix and send him back in the first vessel sailing for France.

Godeheu sailed into Pondicherry on the 1st of August, 1754. Dupleix, who had shown him nothing but kindness in the past, deserved his gratitude. But arriving on board with a welcome, he found Godeheu haughty and aloof. The hospitality Dupleix offered was declined. Godeheu declared that he would land when it suited his convenience. He landed on the next day, summoned instantly a

meeting of the Council and had the order of his appointment as the new Governor read aloud. It was listened to in silence, for Dupleix was loved by the entire settlement.

Then suddenly, before any awkwardness could develop, Dupleix spoke. He did not complain. He made no protest. There was neither a sob nor a sneer in his voice as, raising his chin and waving his arm, he cried, "*Vive le Roi!*"

During the ten weeks he remained at Pondicherry for the examination of his affairs by his successor, Dupleix sent letters to Bussy and others, entreating them to remain and serve Godeheu as faithfully as they had served him—"for the glory of France". He returned home, broken, discredited, beggared. He had poured out his entire private fortune to further the influence of France in India. He had been ruthless in his zeal, indefatigable in his endeavour. If he loved ostentation, he loved France even more. Nine years later he died in abject poverty after making this entry in his diary: "I have sacrificed my youth, my fortune, my life, to enrich my nation in Asia. Unfortunate friends, too weak relations, devoted all their property to the success of my projects. They are now in misery and want. . . . I am treated as the vilest of mankind. I am in the most deplorable indigence. The little property that remained to me has been seized. I am compelled to ask for decrees for delay in order not to be dragged to prison."

France's scorn of conquest was in ill-accord with her earlier aspirations, for actually France had blazed the trail to empire. She had wanted conquests. Her emissaries had been intent not only on collecting gold mohurs, but on inflating the glory of France. They had enlisted hordes of black soldiers, arming and disciplining them in the western manner. Unable to transport enough troops to the east, France had determined on conquering India with Indians. The hopes of Colbert, who had attended the accouchement of the *Compagnie des Indes*, nearly reached fruition with Dupleix. Clive, annexing his methods, annexed the empire.

The methods Dupleix employed in India had been employed more than two hundred years before by Cortes in Mexico. Like Clive, Cortes too came of a decayed noble family. Like Clive, he too was destined for the law. Clive, wondering if the parallel would go further, noted that Cortes combined great personal daring with strategy. Cortes formed alliances with native princes, as Dupleix did later, and assisted his military thrusts with intrigue. He too had recruited vast

native armies, and used them, equipped with arms, to wrest a great empire from Montezuma.

From one prince, Clive observed, Cortes received 600,000 marks of pure gold and a prodigious quantity of precious stones. From his own king, Charles the First of Spain and Fifth of the Holy Roman Empire, Cortes received a marquisate and the gift of a valley in Mexico, yielding a considerable revenue. He was made Governor and Captain General of the country he had conquered. When he returned home he was the idol of the multitude. Yet he died in neglect, crest-fallen, forgotten by his King and country. Dupleix had employed Cortes' methods with considerable success. Clive was to employ them too.

2

When Clive sailed from England, although his destination and objective were clearly defined, his authority was undermined by a royal prerogative. The King's reprobate son, the Duke of Cumberland, insisted that a nominee of his, Colonel Scott, who held a commission in the King's army, should be in command of the expedition against the Nizam. The East India Company, aware of Clive's greater knowledge of the country, thought otherwise, but dared not challenge the royal desire. At the same time they were not disposed to reverse their own appointment. Colonel Scott was already in India, crossing the country to Bombay to take command. They left to Clive the settlement of the question of seniority. It was an unpleasant duty, but Clive did not shirk it. He foresaw trouble. His journey to Bombay was filled with speculation. But fate, very magnanimously, presented him with a solution. Clive was informed on landing that Scott was dead. That left Clive in undisputed command. But a completely new problem confronted him.

Godeheu, on taking over from Dupleix, made immediate overtures for a pact of peace with the English. He proposed a 'suspension of arms during which each nation is to remain in their present condition'. Mr. Saunders, Governor of Madras, accepted on behalf of the English and the truce was signed, subject to the approval of the authorities at home. But as it took well-nigh a year, and often longer, for replies from London and Paris, Clive found himself in Bombay, master of a considerable force, but with nothing to do until the answer came.

Clive himself felt, as he stated in his letter to the directors, that, "I should not be over-scrupulous or wanting in a little chicanery towards a nation who never made any treaties at all but with a view of breaking them, but really at present I think any infringement whatever would not be agreeable to the maxims of sound policy". So, although the Madras Council, in the absence of the Governor, urged it, Clive was unwilling to dishonour the pact, in case, before his plan had attained success, it was interrupted by a confirmation from home of the truce. His concern at this was as much for the Mahrattas as for ourselves. Despite his lack of scruple towards the French, he was not disposed to begin an alliance, even with natives, which could not be faithfully pursued to its conclusion.

3

A hundred and fifty miles to the south of Bombay crouched the stronghold of the Malabar pirates. For four generations from their craggy promontories the robbers had terrorized the seas up to the coasts of Arabia. Confining their raids at first to the small barques of Eastern traders, they had been emboldened by success to attack the big trading ships of Europe. An English vessel, the *Darby*, richly laden, with a hundred and fifty men aboard, had been seized; the war brig *Restoration*, despatched for their punishment, had been taken too. The French and Dutch had also suffered; in 1735 a joint English and French expedition which sought to destroy them, was routed by the pirates.

More venturesome after this triumph, they took to burning and pillaging the coastal towns. In 1746, while Clive was in Madras, an English woman living in Bombay was captured and held to ransom. A vast sum of money had to be paid over by her husband for her release.

Chief of these pirates was Angria, whose grandfather once served in the household of the Governor of Bombay. Tiring of this tame employment he ran away and became leader of a predatory band, who employed at sea the methods that the Mahrattas used so successfully on land. The English strove at first to tame him by persuasion. When that failed, they sent pompous notes denouncing the dishonesty of his conduct. The grandson and successor, the second Angria, merely laughed at such lectures. In a disdainful reply he said:

"As touching the desire of possessing what is another's, I do not even find the merchants exempt from this sort of ambition, for this is the way of the world, for God gives nothing by favour himself but takes from one to give to another. Whether there is right or no, who is able to determine? Your Excellency is pleased to write that he who follows war purely through an inclination that one hath hitherto, one time or another will find cause to repent, of which I suppose Your Excellency hath found proof, for we are not always victorious, nor always unfortunate."

Clearly, drastic action was needed. The protection of shipping was costing us a vast sum annually. Six months before Clive's arrival in Bombay, Commodore James, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Marine, descended on the pirates and drove them from one of their retreats. But Gheriah remained, the most stubborn and the sturdiest of their strongholds, with Angria himself in command.

Clive's army was now idle. There was also a large fleet in port, commanded by Admiral Watson, who had arrived the previous year with a detachment of the King's army for Madras. At hand now were the means for a vigorous attack on Gheriah. Watson and Clive, it was arranged, should co-operate. But before setting out they began arguing over the ultimate division of the spoils. Clive, as head of the army, insisted on his share being equal to that of the head of the fleet. But the plump, puffing Watson was equally insistent that the proportions be arranged according to rank. This reduced Clive's share to that of a naval captain of less than three year's standing. The arguments grew heated. Neither side showed any disposition to yield. At last Watson, still insistent that precedent must be upheld, offered to supplement from his private purse the sum for which Clive was holding out; but, equal to the generous impulse, Clive declined his magnanimity. The expedition then sailed for Gheriah.

It had been arranged that the Mahrattas should co-operate with our squadron. We found them encamped in large numbers in front of Gheriah; but the sole aim of their commander seemed to be to keep us from attacking Angria, who was himself a Mahratta. But we would not be deflected from our purpose. We sent bomb-ketches into the harbour. Our ships attacked and, with a fortunate shell, set an enemy ship on fire, which, since the pirate fleet was in dense formation, spread and destroyed Angria's entire navy. Continuing our attack, we next silenced the guns of the fort. By evening Clive landed and threw his army between the pirates and the wavering Mahrattas to

prevent any collusion. Next day, after further shelling, Gheriah surrendered. An officer and sixty men took possession and the English flag flew above the pirate lair.

The booty proved enormous. Watson and Clive were agreed that the Mahrattas had no recognizable claim to any of it. But the Mahrattas thought otherwise. Resolved on a share, their commandant offered an enormous bribe to the English officer on duty at the fort, Captain Andrew Buchanan, to let a few of his men in; Buchanan flatly refused, and the Bombay government, regarding common honesty as a rare quality in that age and country, presented the captain with a gold medal. Clive's share of the booty amounted to nearly five thousand pounds.

We found thirteen white men, some of them English, serving as slaves in Gheriah. They had been taken from European ships by the pirates and had despaired of ever regaining their freedom. Angria, on the surrender of this last stronghold, abandoned his family and fled. But he was overtaken by the Mahrattas, who put him in irons and threw him into one of their hill fortresses, refusing, despite our repeated pleas, to deliver him to us.

On his return to Bombay, Clive was involved in an angry dispute with the Governor. Offended by a slight, Clive complained against the Governor to his own Council.

The trouble arose over the court-martial of one of his officers. He did not complain, said Clive, "against your Honour and Council for ordering the general court-martial, but against the Governor only, who never thought proper to ask my advice or opinion, or even to inform me himself or by any other person whatever with one syllable relating thereto; and considering the rank I bear of Lieutenant-Colonel in His Majesty's service, of Deputy-Governor of St. David,¹ and of a member of the committee of this place, I do not think that I have been treated by the Hon'ble Richard Bouchier, Esq., agreeably to the intentions of the Hon'ble Court of Directors, who, I flatter myself, will do justice herein when they come to hear hereof".

In replying, the Council declared that they "had no intention to insult or affront you, and that they can likewise answer the same for the President, but that they do not think him in the least obliged to

¹Clive was actually Governor, but this was the official designation. He was Deputy-Governor of Madras and second on the Council there, this position carrying the privilege to govern St. David.

be accountable to any officer of whatever rank, or the Governor of any other settlement for what he shall think proper to lay before the Board, and that they as readily as you refer the whole of this affair to the determination of the Hon'ble Company".

Soon afterwards with his wife, who had been keeping Mrs. Watson and her family company during his absence at Gheriah, Clive sailed for Madras and Fort St. David.

CHAPTER XV

The Black Hole

I

A DAY or two before he arrived at Fort St. David to take up his duties as Governor, there was enacted in our settlement at Calcutta a barbaric tragedy, in avenging which Clive was to establish his greatest claim to our memory.

At the time of Clive's convalescence in Calcutta all Bengal, that vast fertile tract regarded as the Garden of Eden in India, with its rich ricefields, its well-stocked rivers, its salt marshes, its opulent towns, and its teeming millions, was ably administered by that efficient and just ruler, Nawab Aliverdi Khan. On the throne now sat a puny, petulant boy, his grandson, indulged and spoilt in childhood, cruel by disposition, delighting in the torture of bird and beast, intemperate in his desires, and feeble in intellect. He punished his subjects by having their heads squeezed in a specially contrived demoniac device, and by having thorns driven under their nails. Within two weeks of his accession to the throne, under the flamboyant title of Suraj-ud-Dowlah, or Sun of the State, this youth, still in his immature 'teens, made up his mind that he would drive the English out of his province. He had been warned by his grandfather to be wary of these pale settlers who had already caused much havoc among the Nawabs of the South. The weak-chinned prince, anxious to give them no chance of practising similar intrigues in his dominion, sought an early opportunity to march against them.

He found a pretext in our frenzied activities in Calcutta, where, now that war with France seemed imminent in Europe, our merchants were busy strengthening the neglected fortifications. The French settlement of Chandernagore lay twenty-one miles up the river, and we had no wish to be taken unprepared. The boy prince chose to regard this as a defiance of his authority and further accused us of harbouring a fugitive from royal justice, a Hindu nobleman named Kissendas, who was said to have escaped to Calcutta with some treasure. The English promised to hold the fugitive for the Nawab's pleasure; but they assured the Prince that the man had brought away no treasure.

Suraj-ud-Dowlah, covetous of the wealth that, he had heard, filled the homes of the English to overflowing and of the rich merchandise that bulged the warehouses, was not disposed to accept any explanations. He set out with a vast army numbering many thousands and a European-led artillery, plundering on the way the English factory at Cossimbazar, and making the chief there, Mr. William Watts, his prisoner.

At the Nawab's approach, a contemptible panic seized the English merchants and even the garrison in Calcutta. They had doubtless heard of the ruthlessness of the young despot, but the stout courage of Job Charnock, who had battled against terrific odds three generations before to lay the foundations of their city, should have served them more nobly at this hour.

After a brief attempt at defence, merchants, Members of Council, even the Commanding Officer of the army, made a wild dash for the boats. The proud name of Drake was dragged in the dust by the terrified Governor. In boats they made for the few ships that lay at anchor in the river; and the ships speedily made off down the Hughli. From the banks, after the last boats had gone, men and even women pleaded in vain for the vessels to return. Hundreds were left to suffer whatever fate the cruel monarch or his henchmen chose to deal out.

Had the garrison remained it would have been possible for it and for the militia, numbering in all over five hundred, to have put up a brave resistance. Without them it was impossible to hold out.

2

Suraj-ud-Dowlah was convinced that the English Governor, Roger Drake, had been intriguing for his deposition. He had discovered letters from the Company's servants to a widowed aunt and knew that a quest was in progress for a rival to the throne. His grandfather's warning seemed to be coming true. So when Kissendas, a son of his aunt's lover, fled to Calcutta, Suraj-ud-Dowlah's suspicions seemed to be confirmed.

Actually, Kissendas had come to Calcutta not at the invitation of the English, but of Omichand, a Hindu merchant from the Punjab, who on being deprived of certain privileges by the English had

resolved on revenge. Stout, middle-aged, rich, cunning, Omichand had served for years as a contractor for the English traders, purchasing goods for us in the bazaars of Dacca and Murshidabad, recruiting weavers for our factories, negotiating treaties for us with the Nawab. These opportunities brought him a vast fortune. We granted him many privileges and even allowed him to settle in the English part of the town, within the bounds of the fast-filling, foul-smelling Mahratta ditch.

Then came suspicions and doubts as to his honesty. There had been a steady but marked deterioration in the quality of the goods he procured and, in the circumstances, an unjustifiable increase in their price. After many complaints, his contract was cancelled and a number of independent agents were employed for the purchase in future of the Company's goods.

Omichand became sullen and resentful. A year or so later Suraj-ud-Dowlah succeeded to the throne and Omichand was in constant touch with the Court at Murshidabad. The English wondered what was afoot. Soon after Kissendas's arrival in Calcutta we intercepted a letter from the Nawab's chief spy, advising Omichand to pack his belongings and leave the settlement. Not unnaturally, it was concluded that Omichand was in league with Suraj-ud-Dowlah for the destruction of the English. So, with the Nawab's army on the march against us, Governor Drake issued instant orders for Omichand's arrest.

The banker's house was invaded by our soldiers, who had orders also to secure Hazarimul, his brother-in-law, and Kissendas, who was a guest at the time in the house.

Omichand and his guest were seized and taken off to the fort. The brother-in-law fled to the women's quarters, confident that we dared not pursue him there. But the soldiers followed him, battling fiercely with Omichand's vast body of retainers, nearly three hundred in number.

Many on both sides were wounded. The brother-in-law had his left hand cut off. Omichand's jametdar, or head servant, to save the thirteen women from being beheld by strangers, set fire to the house and himself cut their throats. He then stabbed himself, but not fatally. The brother-in-law was at length captured by the English; the jametdar was rescued by his own followers and taken to Suraj-ud-Dowlah. Despite his wounds the old servant mounted a horse and led the Nawab's army into Calcutta.

The abandoned handful in the fort, English, Portuguese, and half-castes, fierce in their oaths against the cowards, elected John Zephaniah Holwell, one of but three steadfast Members of the Council, as their leader. Holwell was an Irishman aged forty-five. After a mercantile career in Holland, he took up the study of medicine in London, and travelled to Calcutta as surgeon-mate in an Indiaman. During his twenty-four years in Calcutta he had supplemented his medical practice with the more alluring rewards of commerce. He had also won sufficient esteem to be made a Collector and a Member of Council. At the approach of Suraj-ud-Dowlah, our Commanding Officer having fled, he took command of the militia.

The Nawab's guns brought terror and death. The battle raged for some hours. Then, suddenly, a sail was seen coming downstream. It was the *Prince George*, a Company's ship stationed farther up the river. New hope animated the garrison. But fate decreed otherwise. The *Prince George* ran aground. So nothing remained now but to surrender. Holwell himself took the flag of truce to the bastion and ordered his men to cease fire. But the enemy, pretending to parley, treacherously scaled the walls of the fort and swooped down on the helpless, but gallant band. They were all seized. Holwell, as their chief, was bound and dragged before the Prince.

Suraj-ud-Dowlah could not make up his mind what punishment should be dealt out. Three times within an hour he had Holwell brought before him. The Portuguese and the half-castes were allowed to return to their homes, but the English he finally decided should be held until the morrow, when, being less weary, he would doubtless be better able to decide.

By a rare turn of fortune Holwell was soon afterwards provided with an unexpected chance of escape. A man named Leach, clerk of the parish, crept in when it was dark and whispered to Holwell that he had brought a boat to take him away. Leach had himself escaped earlier that day, but the memory of past kindnesses had made him return for Holwell. "This might easily have been accomplished," writes Holwell, "as the guard put over us took slight notice of us. I thanked him in the best terms I was able, but told him it was a step I could not prevail on myself to take, as I should thereby very ill repay the attachment the gentlemen and the garrison had shown me;

and that I was resolved to share their fate be it what it would; but pressed him to secure his own escape without loss of time, to which he gallantly replied that 'then he was resolved to share mine, and would not leave me'."

Just then the Nawab's guards, who had been wandering through the fort with torches seeking a suitable place of confinement, came up and conducted the English to the Black Hole, which they had been informed was our normal prison. Unconcerned about dimensions they drove the hundred and forty-six captives into a cell measuring barely eighteen feet square and ventilated by two small windows, iron barred. There was one woman among them, Mrs. Carey, young, attractive, and newly married, who would not leave her husband when the other women went.

Holwell, among the first to go in, took his place at a window and so was able to survive. Driven in at the point of the sword, the rest came tumbling in one upon another. It was a June night, close and sultry. The monsoon was many days overdue. The brief twilight of the East had already given place to night, and the clock of St. Anne's church was booming out the hour of eight. The sky was red with the glare of fires started by the invading army. The smoke and flames made that appalling night of the 20th of June, 1756, hotter and more suffocating. Within a few minutes the prisoners, already exhausted by the strain of the day's battle, were struggling to reach the windows for air. The cell was filled with their cries and groans. To alleviate their agony they tore off their clothes. Some sat down and were trodden upon and suffocated by the press of the others. Those who had hats tried to use them as fans.

Holwell, his face between two bars, implored the native guard outside to get some of them transferred to another room. He even offered bribes. But, after consulting each other, they declared that it could not be done without the Nawab's orders; and as His Highness was asleep, none dared disturb him.

In that close, stifling room the stench of humanity was overwhelming. Holwell dared not even glance inwards. The voices, swearing, moaning, cursing, blaspheming, begged again and again for water, and one old Indian soldier, seemingly more humane than the rest, had water brought to the windows in skins. To catch some of this in their hats the prisoners tore at each other and trampled upon those who had fallen. The scene seemed to divert the Nawab's soldiers, for they came crowding to the windows

with torches held aloft, to grin and guffaw at the tragedy of human suffering.

By eleven o'clock about a third of the prisoners were dead and most of the others were delirious. Holwell, who had not taken off his clothes, sucked at the sleeve of his sweat-sodden shirt in a vain endeavour to quench his thirst, but the sleeve was fought for by others eager to share it. Some were on their knees praying. Others waved their fists and cursed the guards and the Nawab, expecting, hoping, to be shot down. They even begged the guards to fire their muskets and end this suffering. Some clawed at their own throats seeking death. Holwell, unable to endure any longer the weight of bodies pressing against his at the window, crawled in to the suffocation and stench and flopped down upon the Rev. Jervas Bellamy and his son, a young lieutenant, both dead, their hands clasped together. Edward Eyre, a member of Council, turned to Holwell "and asked me how I did, but fell and expired before I had time to make reply".

The night seemed interminable. It was not till six in the morning that the door was unbolted. The guards pushed but they could not open it for the bodies lying against it. It took twenty minutes to sort out the living from the dead. Like ghosts twenty-three forms, hot with fever and unable to stand, crawled out and flung themselves upon the grass outside. Leach was among the dead. Nobly, with a sacrifice that places him high in the gallery of heroes, he had laid down his own life by returning to rescue his friend.

Suraj-ud-Dowlah, learning that the chief was still alive, had Holwell brought again before him. Carried by attendants into the presence, Holwell could not even speak, for his mouth was so parched that though his lips moved no sound came from them. Water was brought. The Nawab passed him a large book on which to sit. With difficulty, Holwell began to describe the agony of the night, but the Nawab cut him short. He was not disposed to listen to complaints. He wanted to know where the rest of the Company's treasure lay hidden, as he had found but little.

With difficulty he was persuaded to believe what was actually the truth, that there wasn't any more treasure to be found. Sullen, resentful, the Nawab ordered the release of all but five prisoners. One of these, Mrs. Carey, who had somehow managed to survive the night, was too attractive to set free. She was added to the royal harem.

The other four, Holwell among them, their bodies covered with

boils brought on by their sufferings, with irons now clamped on wrists and legs, converting these boils into sores, were conducted by wearisome stages to Murshidabad, the capital of Bengal, where they were led through streets lined by gaping crowds.

After weeks of still further humiliation and suffering they were at last released. Holwell left India soon afterwards for England, wondering whether Omichand was not the chief instigator of the tragedy of the Black Hole, for he knew, as all did, that 'Omychand can never forgive'.

CHAPTER XVI

The Return to Calcutta

I

NEWS of the tragedy did not reach Madras until the 16th of August. The small English population there was utterly dumbfounded. Earlier, when they heard that the Nawab was marching with his army on Calcutta, they had sent a detachment under Major Kilpatrick to assist the garrison. But Calcutta's Governor and Commanding Officer fled before Kilpatrick could reach them.

Madras realized that the Black Hole would have to be avenged. Bengal's trade was too valuable to lose. At the head of the Southern settlement was Governor Pigot, who had been with Clive in his adventure with the polygars when the fleetness of their horses saved their lives. His first thought now was of Clive, his second in Council and the ablest soldier Britain had ever sent to the East.

Clive answered the summons eagerly. By general consent he was given command of the expedition, with Admiral Watson's fleet in support. But jealousy, such as had stood between Duplex and La Bourdonnais, now flared up, causing strife and delay. Of equal rank, but of greater authority because he held a commission in the King's instead of the Company's army, was Colonel Aldercron, commanding His Majesty's 39th Regiment of Foot, which had been lent by the Government at home to the East India Company. Aldercron insisted that he had a better claim than Clive to lead the expedition; but the Council considered that he was inexperienced in Indian warfare.

Incensed at this, Aldercron not only refused to let any of his men serve under Clive, but went so far as to order the immediate disembarkation of such of his artillery, stores, etc., as had already been placed on board. The Governor and the Council reasoned with him. But he was adamant. The artillery had to be unshipped. Guns, stores, munitions were disembarked. Horror, grief, resentment at the terrible tragedy in Calcutta mattered little to Aldercron. He was concerned merely with his dignity. After much pressure he agreed eventually to lend two hundred and fifty of his men, provided they served as marines under the Admiral's instead of Clive's command. With them

went a young Captain Coote, known to posterity as Sir Eyre Coote, lean, long-faced, lantern-jawed.

Before setting out, Clive, in a letter to the directors at home, said: "I am now upon the point of embarking on board His Majesty's squadron, with a fine body of Europeans, full of spirit and resentment for the insults and barbarities inflicted on so many British subjects. I flatter myself that this expedition will not end with the taking of Calcutta only; and that the Company's estate in those parts will be settled in a better and more lasting condition than ever. There is less reason to apprehend a check from the Nabob's forces, than from the nature of the climate and country."

In another letter, addressed to a friend, Clive said he was "not so apprehensive of the Nabob of Bengal's forces, as of being recalled by the news of a war [with France], or checked in our progress by the woods and swampiness of the country, which is represented as being almost impassable for a train of artillery".

Clive sailed on the 16th of October with a force of 2,400 men. Within a month news reached Madras that war had broken out between England and France. It meant the end of the truce in India between these countries. The position seemed grave to the Governor and Council of Madras, who instantly despatched a letter after Clive, urging him to attack the French settlement at Chander-nagore in Bengal and return without delay and with as many troops as possible. Madras, with its bitter memories of the previous war, was already straining its eyes for a sudden reappearance of the French fleet.

2

Watson and Clive had to fight a severe monsoon all the way to Calcutta; but resolutely they went on. A few days before sailing the Admiral had been granted sick leave to England, but faced by this crisis he decided at once to stay on. A man of dominant will and an obstinate, interfering temper, he added to the difficulties attending their departure by opposing the arrangements made by the Governor and Council of Madras for the Government of Calcutta in the event of its recovery. It was apparent to all that after their cowardly retreat the original Governor and Council should not again be entrusted with office. To all, but not to Watson, who insisted that they should remain until the directors in England decided to replace them. This was

ultimately agreed to, but both Clive and Watson were equipped with powers independent of the Calcutta Council.

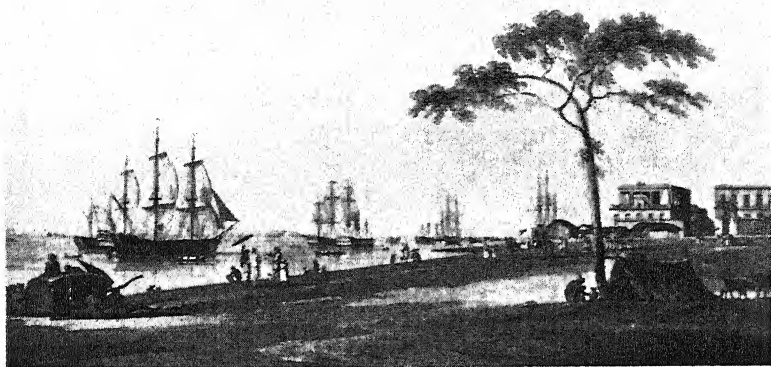
Of the ten expeditionary ships, two were lost for months. The rest, learning at a port of call of the terrible plight of the Calcutta refugees, who were living in Fulta in utter destitution, hurried on. The misery of these refugees is easier imagined than described. Here in Fulta, a small fishing village forty miles south of Calcutta, gentlemen of the East India Company who had lorded it in the settlement with their wealth, their large houses, their hosts of retainers, now had barely enough to eat. They lived herded together in mud huts, magnanimously vacated for them by the fisher-folk. Others, for lack of better accommodation, lived in the boats. A very few had the comfort of tents. Their clothes were in rags. There were no bazaars. For the everyday necessities of life they were indebted to the French sailors who passed up and down the river on their way to or from the French settlement at Chandernagore.

Disease broke out among them and wrought havoc. A few days after their arrival those of the survivors of the Black Hole who were released drifted down and joined them. Warren Hastings, a young writer employed at the up-river factory at Cossimbazar which the Nawab had seized, drifted down here too, and soon after his arrival married Mrs. Buchanan, the widow of one of the victims of the Black Hole. Some weeks later, Major Kilpatrick arrived with his detachment, too late to save Calcutta and too small in numbers to attempt to recover it. So he too, with his two hundred and forty men, augmented the distress at Fulta by herding together with the rest.

For over five months they waited, praying, hoping, watching, quarrelling, for there were abundant recriminations; and then at last our ships were sighted, bringing Clive and Admiral Watson. The miserable refugees became delirious with excitement. It meant their deliverance. It meant the end of their protracted suffering.

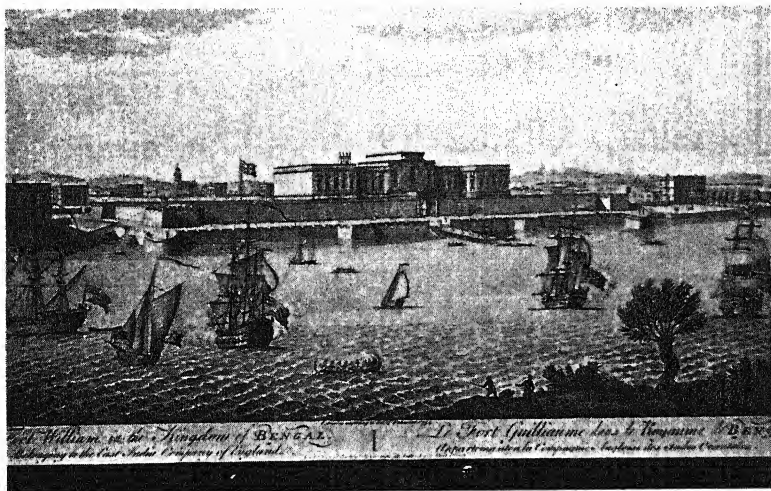
The expedition arrived just before Christmas. Of Kilpatrick's two hundred and forty men only thirty remained alive, so great had been the havoc of disease; and of these barely ten were strong enough to fight.

Clive and Warren Hastings met now for the first time. The younger man, fired by the example and enthusiasm of Clive, volunteered for military service and shouldered a musket, as Clive had done in a similar moment of crisis earlier in his life.



(By kind permission of the Victoria & Albert Museum)

Calcutta in Clive's time. A view from the Esplanade. (From a drawing by Thomas Daniell.)



(By kind permission of the Victoria & Albert Museum)

Fort William, the fort Clive built in Calcutta. (From the engraving by J. van Ryne.)



(By kind permission of the Commonwealth Relations Office)

Admiral Watson, from a painting by T. Hudson.

A few days later the expedition moved up the river towards Calcutta. Clive was ill with "a violent cold and slight fever", but he marched with his men upon Budge Budge, the first formidable fort that barred our return to our settlement.

3

Through swamp and jungle, across innumerable watercourses, encountering inconceivable difficulties, marched Clive and fifteen hundred men. For want of draught cattle they dragged the guns themselves, over mounds, into hollows. Clive was weak with fever, his troops exhausted. But they went on, all through the night, marching, marching, for fifteen hours on end.

By eight o'clock in the morning they arrived at the dry bed of a lake. They were now about a mile and a half from Budge Budge, but too weary to attack. Clive decided upon rest, and as the lake hollow was large enough to hold them all and screened by the approaching jungle, they stacked their arms and rolled wearily to sleep.

To warn them of the enemy's movements Clive had despatched two detachments in different directions. But an enemy force, numbering three thousand, contrived to elude them. Creeping up to the hollow, they beheld with joy the spectacle of the sentryless sleepers. Clive slept on. Not a man stirred. The enemy, after a hurried consultation, decided to attack. Their commander, Manakchand, now Governor of Calcutta, issued the order and a continuous fire was poured by his troops upon Clive and his slumbering army.

In an instant the English leapt up and made a dash for their arms which lay, had the enemy but known it, sixty yards away. Clive, drowsy, weary, enfeebled by sickness, gauged the situation and, with that swift decision that had already won him renown, contrived a way out. He realized that to order a retreat might cause panic among weary troops. So he ordered them to face the fire.

The enemy's matchlocks tore large gaps in our ranks, but Clive never wavered. Charging vigorously, he drove the natives back into the jungle. Their officers implored them to return, but they would not leave the shelter of swamp and forest. When Clive's field-pieces were brought into play they fled towards Calcutta. Clive had demonstrated that the English could fight, which the enemy did not

know before and would not have believed after what had occurred in Calcutta.

While Clive was thus involved, Admiral Watson's fleet anchored off Budge Budge and began the attack on the fort. Heavy, concentrated fire carved a breach in the ramparts for Clive's men to pass through, but, following the morning's battle, Clive's troops were too exhausted to engage in another, so the attack was deferred until the next day.

Two hundred and fifty sailors who had landed from the ships to assist Clive, spent the night in riotous revelry. Flushed with wine, one of them, a hot-headed Irishman named Strahan, decided in a spirit of daring to take the fort alone. He dashed recklessly through the breach and found himself amid a surprised group, talking and smoking in a circle.

Firing his pistol at them, Strahan waved it drunkenly above his head and shouted "The fort is mine!" He then called for three hearty cheers, which he alone gave; while he was cheering, the enemy fell upon him and would have split his skull had he not whipped out his cutlass to defend himself.

Strahan fought like a fiend, shouting all the time for help. Some comrades rushed to the rescue, and at the sound of their firing, other English soldiers dashed up. After a brief tussle, the enemy abandoned the fort, and Captain Eyre Coote took possession of Budge Budge in the name of the English.

The next day the drunken Strahan was dragged before the Admiral. A stickler for the conventions, Watson fixed him with a look of intense anger. He viewed the sailor's conduct as a grave breach of discipline, and in a severe voice demanded, "Mr. Strahan, what is this that you have been doing?"

Strahan scratched his head reflectively; then fidgeting awkwardly with his hat, he wrinkled his nose and said: "Why, to be sure, sir, it was I that took the fort, and I hope there was no harm in it."

The Admiral, though he could scarcely restrain a smile, refused to acquit Strahan. He lectured him in a severe rasping tone on the evils of his drunkenness and dismissed him finally with a hint of punishment, which made Strahan rejoin his comrades with a surly oath. "Well," he declared, "if I am flogged for this action, I will never take another fort by myself as long as I live, by God!"

Some years later Strahan, then living on a pension, called on Mr. Edward Ives, who had been surgeon in the Admiral's flagship during

this expedition, and begged him to gratify a lifelong ambition by getting him a job as cook in a first-class ship.

4

Clive's stand in the hollow off Budge Budge and the daring of a drunken sailor proved so destructive to the morale of the enemy that they did not even attempt to defend Calcutta. Admiral Watson arrived there with his ships on the 2nd of January and entered without resistance. Clive, who had landed his troops a little below the town, marched in at the same time. But while there was no trouble from the natives, our own people provided enough. Clive was administered a snub which involved him in an unpleasant dispute with the Admiral, who had already been the cause of much unpleasantness in the past. Ignoring Clive's command, Watson had appointed Captain Coote Governor of the fort. Clive refused to allow a junior military officer to supersede him. But it was the old jealousy flaring up, the scorn of the King's navy and army (for Coote was one of Aldercron's men) for the officers of the Company.

Writing of this to his friend Pigot, Governor of Madras, Clive said: "Between friends, I cannot help regretting that I ever undertook this expedition. The mortifications I have received from Mr. Watson and the gentlemen of the squadron, in point of prerogative, are such that nothing but the good of the service could induce me to submit to them.

"The morning the enemy quitted Calcutta, a party of our sepoys entered the fort at the same time with a detachment from the ships, and were ignominiously thrust out; upon coming near the fort myself, I was informed that there were orders that none of the Company's officers or troops should have entrance.

"This, I own, enraged me to such a degree that I was resolved to enter if possible, which I did, though not in the manner maliciously reported, by forcing the sentries; for they suffered us to pass very patiently upon being informed who I was.

"At my entrance, Captain Coote presented me with a commission from Admiral Watson, appointing him Governor of Fort William¹ which I knew not a syllable of before; and it seems this dirty underhand contrivance was carried on in the most secret manner, under a pretence

¹Calcutta.

that I intended the same thing, which, I declare, never entered my thoughts."

The Admiral, learning that Clive persisted in assuming command, warned him that the ships would open fire on him if he did not vacate the fort at once. But Clive refused to comply. A compromise was effected at last: the Admiral himself took charge in the King's name and then handed the fort over to the Company.

CHAPTER XVII

Terrorization

I

CLIVE found Calcutta largely in ruins. The prosperous settlement he had convalesced in eight years before now lay ravaged and crumbling. St. Anne's church, in front of the fort, had been destroyed by the invaders. All the houses had been pillaged. Even the church of the half-castes, which stood near the black town, had not been overlooked.

As at Arcot, Clive realized that we were unlikely to be left in unchallenged possession. A formidable army would soon be assembled to drive us effectively and irretrievably from Bengal. Clive's first concern was to anticipate the Nawab's plans and, if possible, to fill him with awe. But the one thought of the disgruntled merchants of Calcutta was of self and the compensation that ought to be awarded them. Already reinstated in all his glory was the former Governor, Drake. Clive, by virtue of the powers conferred upon him by Madras, was independent of his control, but sat with him on the Select Committee, which had power to supersede the decisions of Governor and Council.

"The gentlemen here," Clive wrote in exasperation to Pigot, "seem much dissatisfied at the authority I am vested with. It would be contradicting my own sentiments, if I was not to acknowledge that I still preserve the opinion that the gentlemen of Madras could not have taken a step more prudent, or more consistent with the Company's interests; for I am sorry to say, the loss of private property, and the means of recovering it, seem to be the only objects which take up the attention of the Bengal gentlemen.

"I would have you guard against everything these gentlemen can say; for believe me, they are bad subjects and rotten at heart, and will stick at nothing to prejudice you and the gentlemen of the Committee¹; indeed, how should they do otherwise when they have not spared one another? I shall only add, their conduct at Calcutta finds no excuse, even among themselves; and that the riches of Peru and Mexico should not induce me to dwell among them."

¹The Madras Council.

Yet Clive was not unmindful of the damage done to Calcutta and the loss suffered by the residents. To his father he wrote in February 1757: "It is not possible to describe the distresses of the inhabitants of this once opulent and great town. It must be many years before it is restored to its former grandeur. It is computed the private losses amount to upwards of two millions sterling.

"I enjoy my health better than could be expected, and think my nervous complaint decreases. Mrs. Clive was very well when I last heard from her, which was the fourth of last month. Colonel Lawrence is Governor of St. David's during my absence. I believe it would be no difficult matter to get appointed from home Governor of this place; but it would be neither agreeable to me nor to my advantage. I heartily wish in these perilous and uncertain times all my money was in England; for I do not think it safe here; no one knows what the event of war may be in these parts. My loss by the capture of Calcutta is no less than £2,500; so that hitherto I am money out of pocket by my second trip to India. I hope the end may crown all."

2

Clive's concern was the re-establishment of authority and the consolidation of what had been secured. Already, he knew, envoys had appeared breathlessly before the Nawab to inform him, with a humility consistent with their alarm, that the new English were far more valiant, far more to be feared than the craven crowd who had scuttled out of the fort in Calcutta. There was the taking of Budge Budge. Then the brazen return of them all to the settlement. And, further to display our might, Clive had within a day or two despatched a force, assisted by the fleet, to the Nawab's fortified town of Hughli, "a very large and rich city", as a contemporary observer described it, about thirty miles up the river.

Major Kilpatrick led the troops. After a vigorous cannonade lasting eight hours he attacked the fort from two sides. The Nawab's men were driven out. Not much treasure was found; the Dutch, it was said, had allowed it to be placed for safety in their adjacent settlement of Chinsurah.

When the expedition left Hughli, three of our sailors, who through weariness had fallen asleep there, were inadvertently left behind. Awakening, they covered up their plight by wandering across country

and setting fire to villages in order to give the impression that the entire English force was still ashore. Then, by good fortune, they found a raft and were able to rejoin the fleet.

When news of all this reached Suraj-ud-Dowlah, he was very angry and at intervals very frightened. He was young. He was lustful. His heavily-lidded eyes were never so enthralled as at the sight of dancing girls, jangling their anklets and wagging their tightly draped hips. His cut-away chin, lost in that precipitous descent from lofty cheek-bones to a lean neck, betokened his flabby irresolution. He did not want war. He wished to be left alone to pursue his pleasures.

But it was incompatible with his dignity as Nawab of the triple provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, as Viceroy of the Grand Moghul and guardian of the 'Eden of India', to submit to such arrogance as this small, defiant band of traders were displaying. A few months ago he had thought himself rid of these intruders. He had driven them from their settlement. He had heard that they were living like dogs in the village of Fulta, and had not troubled to harass them further, for they were defenceless, without forts, without money, awaiting ships and better weather to travel overseas to their distant home. He deplored now the neglected opportunity. It would be necessary to repeat the instruction he had but lately administered. So orders were issued to his Chancellor and to his Commander-in-Chief for the army to take the field and to march against the wretches engaged in repairing their injured dignity in Calcutta.

3

In a tent outside Calcutta, Clive and Watson sat together at dinner. The night was chilly, as it often is in the month of February on the plains of Bengal. The air was oppressive with mosquitoes. A month had passed since they had recovered this settlement and Watson had threatened to shoot Clive out of the fort if he didn't give up the command to a junior officer.

Tonight they were dining amicably, the Admiral the guest of the Colonel. But there was neither cordiality nor friendship between the two men. The Admiral was a little contemptuous of the presumption and assurance of immaturity. Clive had won his spurs early. His Carnatic victories had brought him world-wide renown. He had returned from England as Governor of an important East Indian

settlement before he was even thirty. He was confident, ambitious, resentful of interference.

The other was about a dozen years older. He had been better born, better educated. There was about him an air of birth and breeding that hinted at the uncle who was First Lord of the Admiralty. Besides, he was head of His Majesty's East Indian Navy, whereas Clive was a clerk turned soldier, with a hastily granted commission as colonel to lend him dignity. In Watson's view a junior lieutenant of His Majesty's regular army was of more consequence. There was impatience, haughtiness, even defiance in the younger man; in the Admiral there was an accommodating air in his co-operation with the chief of the Company's forces.

Tonight they were dining together, because there was much afoot that needed discussion. Following our demonstration of strength at Hughli, Clive had intended marching upon Dacca, the ancient capital of the Nawabs which had recently surrendered pride of place to the new and more magnificently built city of Murshidabad. But news had come that the Nawab was about to revisit his anger upon the English. That is why Clive was waiting here, four miles in front of Calcutta, with his troops around him.

While the turbaned servants passed plates with gloved hands and poured wine out of napkin-swathed bottles, an orderly stepped respectfully into their presence and saluted.

Clive and the Admiral glanced up at him, his form dark against the door, his brown eyes gleaming in the flare of the lamps upon the table.

The orderly had news of moment to impart. Less than a mile away, he said, the Nawab had come with an army of 50 elephants, 18,000 cavalry, 15,000 infantry, 10,000 pioneers, 40,000 coolies and 40 pieces of cannon.

The meal was left unfinished. Without a further word the Admiral leapt into a boat and hastened towards Calcutta to further the preparations for defence. As he went shots were fired after him by the enemy, but he got away unhurt. Clive marched towards the Nawab with a detachment of men and six field-pieces, but they did no more than fire at each other.

The next day the Nawab expressed a desire for discussion rather than for war. He suggested that two English envoys should wait upon him to discuss a possible settlement. Scrafton and Mrs. Clive's cousin, Walsh, were sent.

But the Nawab did not keep the appointment. He was not at the indicated place, but six miles away, in the garden of Omichand, with whom he had been in the closest touch ever since Omichand's release by him from the English prison in Calcutta. Together they had come now towards the settlement, escorted by the royal army. Secretly, Omichand had been making eager overtures to us all the time, for there was nothing he loved so much as to be on both sides of the fence, and he was cunning enough to achieve that seemingly impossible feat.

Our deputies sought out the Nawab. On their arrival in his garden, Omichand led them aside and cautioned them to be careful. Suraj-ud-Dowlah received them with ceremony, but referred them to his ministers. Nothing was achieved. Scrafton and Walsh left so dissatisfied that Clive felt further terrorization was essential before any satisfactory issue could be hoped for from the Nawab.

4

That night Clive set out with six guns and two thousand men. At the outset the adventure nearly ended disastrously for him. The English were greeted by the enemy with a shower of arrows and fire rockets. One of the rockets landed on the powder pouch of a grenadier and exploded it. This sent sparks to the pouch of the man alongside, and then to the next, all of whom suffered the same fate. So a whole platoon was blown up. But Clive marched on. When day was due there was no dawn, for a severe fog made it scarce clearer than night. In this not much could be achieved, but Clive fired at sounds. Volleys directed at the clatter of approaching cavalry annihilated the Nawab's most select corps of horsemen.

On, across rice-fields, into ditches, and right through the heart of the enemy's encampment, Clive marched, firing wildly in all directions in order to strike terror. At intervals some opposing fire was encountered. After a seven-hour exercise of these tactics Clive returned to his camp. There had been no battle, but he attained the effect he had sought, which as Watson expressed it later, "was to show what an army of Englishmen was capable of doing"; for Suraj-ud-Dowlah, who had been off-hand with our delegates the day before, now expressed his readiness to submit to whatever terms the English chose to offer. Without further delay he signed a treaty restoring our old trading

privileges, permitting all our goods to pass untaxed, guaranteeing compensation for the damage done at the sack of Calcutta, granting us permission to maintain and strengthen the fortifications of Calcutta, and assuring the English that henceforth their enemies would be treated by him as his own enemies. It was a complete surrender. What had before been the subject of protest was now assured the English as a right. Upon this treaty were affixed the signatures of Mir Jaffar, Commander-in-Chief of the Nawab's army, and of Roy Dullub, the Chancellor, both destined to take an early hand with the English against their master.

The peace was graced by the despatch of gifts from Suraj-ud-Dowlah to Clive, Watson and the Governor, Drake. He sent them each an elephant, an Eastern robe and a jewel to wear in the turban. But Watson, who had not been disposed to make peace, brusquely declined the gift. Peace however, Clive felt, was essential, for with the outbreak of war with France there was the risk that the French from Chandernagore and the Nawab might combinedly march against us. Suraj-ud-Dowlah had already offered the French liberal bribes to join him, but they had withstood the temptation. And not in Bengal alone was there danger. Madras lay at the mercy of Pondicherry. By every ship letters came from Pigot urging Clive to return.

Clive attached the utmost importance to what had already been achieved in Bengal. He regarded his march through the Nawab's camp as "the warmest service I ever yet was engaged in". He wrote innumerable letters to describe the benefits that must accrue from it, "greatly to the honour and advantage of the Company". He despatched a detailed account of his success to the Prime Minister, the Duke of Newcastle, who had been responsible for his ejection from Parliament; to Henry Fox who had spoken so vehemently in his support; to the Archbishop of Canterbury; to Lord Barrington, who was Secretary for War; to Lord Hardwicke, the Lord Chancellor; and to others. Some of these were asked, "if you think me deserving, to recommend me to the Court of Directors". To his father he confided his desire to be made Governor-General of India, an office that had not yet been created. "As this success," he wrote, "has probably saved the Company, this is a proper time to push my interest. I am desirous of being appointed Governor-General of India if such an appointment should be necessary. However, I would have you manage this affair with great prudence and discretion and not mention the word Governor-General without you find it hinted at by other hands."

Yet, despite these exultant notes, Clive had no faith in oriental princes and their treaties. "It cannot be expected," he wrote to the Chairman of the East India Company, "that the princes of this country, whose fidelity is always to be suspected, will remain firm to their promises and engagements from principle only. It is, therefore, become absolutely necessary to keep up a respectable force in this province for the future."

That Clive was right in this conclusion was proved by Suraj-ud-Dowlah's more ardent advances to the French before his treaty with us was even a week old. Bussy, left by Dupleix in the capital of the Nizam, was at the time in the Northern Circars, a vast tract connecting the Carnatic with Bengal; and Suraj-ud-Dowlah kept urging him to march into Bengal to assist in driving the English from the country.

Overthrow of the French

I

THE French in Bengal had shown many courtesies and much kindly consideration towards the English. Captain Jean Law, elder brother of Jacques, who had besieged us at Trichinopoly and surrendered with his entire force to Clive, was at the time of the Black Hole in charge of the French factory at Cossimbazar, the commercial suburb of Suraj-ud-Dowlah's capital. He knew Watts and Warren Hastings, who were arrested when the Nawab marched on Calcutta. He met Holwell when that brave man was conducted in chains to Murshidabad.

"On the 7th of July, early in the morning," Holwell states, "we came in sight of the French factory. I had a letter prepared for Mr. Law, the Chief, and prevailed with my friend Bodul, to put to there. On the receipt of my letter, Mr. Law, with much politeness and humanity, came down to the waterside, and remained near an hour with us. He gave the Shaik a genteel present for his civilities, and offered him a considerable reward and security, if he would permit us to land for an hour's refreshment; but he replied, his head would pay for the indulgence. After Mr. Law had given us a supply of cloths, linen, provisions, liquors, and cash, we left his factory with grateful hearts and compliments."

To the refugees at Fulta the French rendered many kindly services, and when Clive and Watson ran up the English flag again above the fort in Calcutta, the Governor and Council of Chandernagore were among the first to congratulate us upon our return. Moreover, despite the Nawab's repeated requests and inducements they had refrained from joining him against us. That is doubtless why the Nawab was disposed to come to terms after that night of terror.

Yet the moment the treaty was signed, while the Nawab was engaged in angling again for French assistance, Clive was striving to obtain the royal permission to drive the French out of Chandernagore, out of all Bengal. He realized, as he had told the directors of the East

India Company earlier, that there could be no peace so long as a single Frenchman remained in India. He remembered how Dupleix, in similar circumstances, had defied the Nawab of the Carnatic and had seized Madras. But Clive had no wish, with the slender forces at his disposal, to defy Suraj-ud-Dowlah unnecessarily. He preferred to obtain his consent by persuasion, bluff, cajolery, or bribes. Watts, now again our representative at the Court, was assisted by Omichand, whose cunning Clive appreciated and intended to use. Together they strove against the weak and irresolute ruler. With his inventive wit Omichand advanced fresh lies and arguments every day, but the Nawab, aware that the French could provide a check to English ambitions, struggled desperately to save himself from yielding.

The French, learning what was afoot, stiffened the resistance of the Nawab by begging him to insist on a pact of neutrality in Bengal between the two nations. Obviously, the French were not in a position to fight us. The garrison in Chandernagore was small. Ever since our return to Calcutta the French had been feverishly engaged in strengthening the defences of their town. With the outbreak of war in Europe their one concern was how to keep it out of Bengal. But Clive was eager to strike before Bussy could arrive with reinforcements from the South.

Warned that the Nawab intended to defend the French with his entire strength, Clive decided to bide his time. Meanwhile, as the royal plea for a pact of neutrality continued, Clive felt there could be no better display of sincerity than to sign it.

French deputies arrived in Calcutta. The conditions were discussed by the Select Committee and agreed to. The treaty was drawn up and ready for signature—but Watson refused to sign. He argued, with sound common sense, that the treaty would merely tie our hands without fettering the French at all, since Chandernagore could make no commitments without the endorsement of Pondicherry. Conscious of this, Clive intended the treaty as no more than a gesture. But Watson's conscience would not countenance it. Arguments raged for days across the committee table. Watson refused to give in. In the end Clive, weary of striving against this obstinacy, his face flushed, the perspiration beading his puckered brow, thumped his fist in defiant finality. He told Watson there was only one of two courses open to him. "Either sign the treaty, or go on and capture Chandernagore."

The Admiral refused to do either. The treaty remained unsigned.

This delay proved to be to Clive's advantage, though with the new turn in events the intractable Admiral advanced fresh opposition.

From the barren hills to the north-west of India, fierce Afghan horsemen had for centuries poured down at intervals into the inviting plains, bringing death, rapine, and destruction. Now they came again. Delhi, capital no more of a vigorous imperialism, but the theatre of a feeble shadow play at governance by pitiful Moghul weaklings, was again sacked and taken. The Afghans even swept beyond Delhi, towards the paradisial glories of Bengal.

At this Suraj-ud-Dowlah trembled upon his throne. Vast tracts had been devastated up to the borders of his province. How could he stem the mad onrush of these fierce horsemen? He needed the help of the strongest ally he could find, and it is eloquent of the impression Clive had made that Suraj-ud-Dowlah should now have turned to him for help. He sent a pressing letter, begging Clive to come at once with his troops. He offered to pay Clive a hundred thousand rupees a month for his services.

Clive saw his opportunity. To reach the Nawab he would have to march his army past Chandernagore. He would declare that the French could not be left to attack Calcutta while his back was turned. He would assert that he could not assist the Nawab at all unless Calcutta was assured of this security. As luck would have it, on the very day he received the Nawab's appeal for help, three ships arrived in the Hughli with English reinforcements. Clive decided to act at once, but Watson again opposed him.

Watson now argued that it was not right to attack the French without the express sanction of the Nawab. If the others lacked scruple he would himself write to seek this permission. His letter was couched in terms not persuasive but menacing. He accused the Nawab of evading all the essentials of his treaty and threatened to "kindle such a flame in the country as all the waters in the Ganges would not be able to extinguish".

Instead of incensing the Nawab the letter merely paralysed him with fear. The Afghan menace seemed hourly nearer and he was faced now with the loss of the only assistance that could combat it effectively. He wanted to placate the English. He wanted also to safeguard the French. His reply was evasive, but the letter-writer, bribed by Watts

and Omichand, worded it so that it read: "You have understanding and generosity. If your enemy, with an upright heart, claim your protection, you will give him life; but you must be well satisfied with the innocence of his intention. If not, whatever you think, that do."

The English interpreted that as consent. Even Watson's conscience was satisfied. And the army got ready for its march on Chandernagore.

But within twenty-four hours the Nawab, realizing the full purport of what he had signed and learning that the Afghan menace was less acute, wrote again in very definite terms forbidding the attack on the French. But it was too late. Both Clive and Watson ignored this altered attitude. The army marched on Chandernagore, and Watson's ships moved relentlessly up the Hughli.

3

Feverish efforts were made by the French to defend their town. Guns were mounted on the church. The land approaches were commanded by batteries. Several ships were sunk in the river to block our passage. But the officer entrusted with this task picked up a message, shot by arrow by the English, offering rewards to all "officers who will come over to us". Tempted, M. Terreneau, who had sacrificed an arm to the greater glory of France, now decided to betray his own people. He left a navigable channel and then deserted to reveal it to the English. He was, as Clive informed Watson, "the only artillery officer at Chandernagore". He lived to amass wealth in the service of the English, but his aged father in France sent back his letters and his money, declaring that he would have nothing to do with a traitor; and in shame, the son hanged himself with his handkerchief from a nail on the door.

But despite this treachery there were fierce battles for Chandernagore by land and by water. The captain of our flagship, Henry Speke, and his son had the ill-fortune to be struck down by the same shot. Both were badly wounded, the boy's leg hanging only by the skin. Still, etiquette demanded that the father, as the superior officer, should be attended to first. He was rushed down to the surgeon, while the quartermaster lifted the boy up tenderly. But a cannon-ball tore across the deck, killed the quartermaster, and flung the injured boy out of his arms. Another sailor gallantly rushed forward and picked

the lad up again. He was carried safely below, but did not live long. When his death was announced to the Admiral, Watson broke down. "He cried bitterly," the surgeon tells us, "squeezed me by the hand, and begged me to leave him."

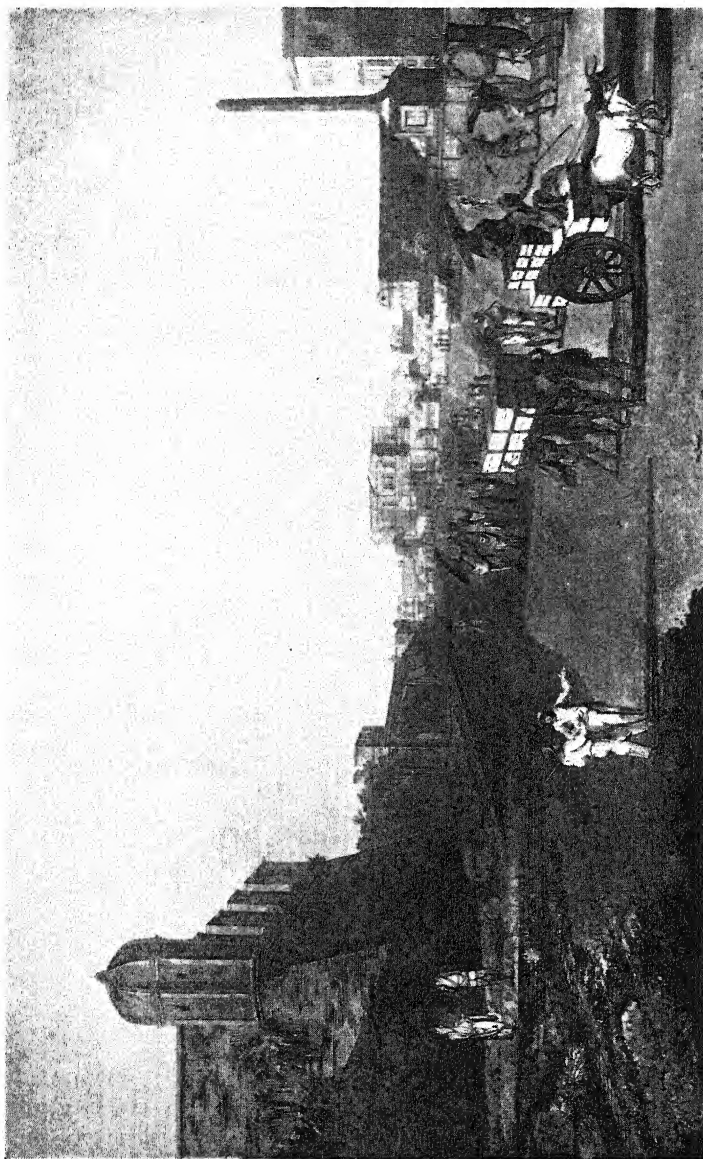
Throughout the encounter with the French, which lasted ten days, the enemy clutched at the one hope that the Nawab would intervene on their behalf and repulse the English. But Suraj-ud-Dowlah, though defied, still vacillated. He had seen enough of Clive's valour to fear him. He always spoke of Clive as "the daring in war, upon whom may bad fortune attend". He had begun to realize what Southern India realized already, that the native forces were not equal in fighting power to the armies of Europe. So he preferred to rely on letters. He wrote to Clive two and three times a day ordering him not to attack, and then commanding him to stop. But Clive ignored all the letters. The attack went on. The Nawab, incensed at last by such continued defiance, despatched a strong force under his Chancellor Roy Dullub, to the assistance of the French; but again treachery aided the English. The wily Omichand bribed Numcomar, Governor of Hughli, the arch-intriguer whom Warren Hastings was to hang later, to keep the Nawab's army from reaching the French. And Chandernagore surrendered to the English.

The French stronghold in Bengal had fallen. English troops occupied the town. Along the imposing boulevards, upon the handsome river front, English accents were heard. Clive had triumphed in the place where Dupleix had performed his earliest labours.

4

Despite the very stout fighting by Clive's men, Admiral Watson was opposed to Clive being associated with the terms of the French surrender. But, with his customary persistence, Clive refused to submit to this fresh indignity. He insisted on having a hand in the treaty, but agreed to leave the captured fortifications in the charge of Eyre Coote, with whom, three months earlier, there had been so much trouble in Calcutta.

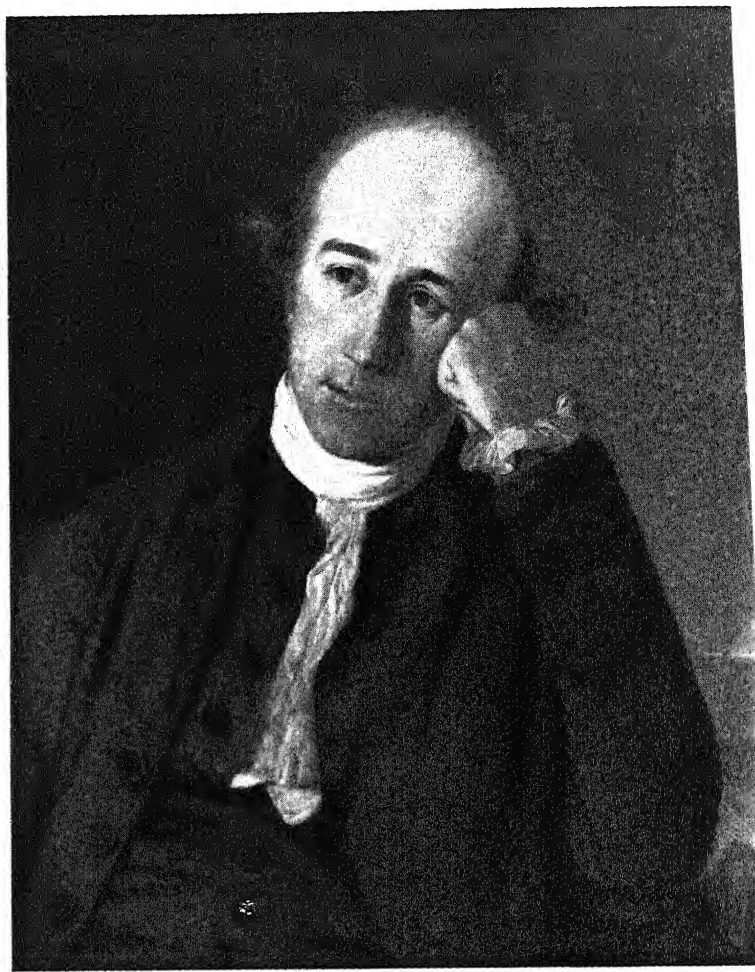
Though ungracious towards Clive, Watson adopted a gallant attitude towards an unfortunate Frenchman, M. Nicholas, who had improvidently left his effects unprotected when our soldiers swarmed into Chandernagore. Everything was taken. Nicholas, father of a large



(By kind permission of the Commonwealth Relations Office)

Calcutta, showing the Old Fort on the left, the Black Hole Monument on the right and between them, in the distance, the house Clive occupied after the Battle of Plassey. This street was later named Clive Street.

(From the painting by T. Daniell.)



(National Portrait Gallery)

Warren Hastings (1732-1818), from a painting by T. Kettle.

family, was ruined. Watson organized a fund to assist him and himself subscribed fifteen hundred rupees.

The Frenchman was touched when the money was handed to him. In a few minutes £1,200 had been collected. "Good God," he sobbed gratefully, "here are friends indeed!" and vowed that the "prayers of his children's children would be frequently presented to Heaven" for those who had assisted.

When news reached the Nawab of the fall of Chandernagore he was furious. He stormed and raved. He wrote to the English threatening to visit them with the direst punishments. He would not brook, he declared, this continued defiance of his authority. His passion made him ungovernable. But just as he was about to act, a new alarm brought him again to tractability. He was informed that the Afghans and the Mahrattas were conspiring to descend combinedly upon him. There was in this news not the slenderest vestige of fact, but it served its purpose. Trembling anew, the Nawab wrote fresh letters to Clive and Watson. He now warmly tendered his congratulations on their triumph over the French. He offered to let them keep Chandernagore themselves. He indulged in new and elaborate expressions of friendship. He even promised to fulfil without further delay all the terms of his neglected treaty, and to pay the long-delayed compensation for the havoc he had wrought in Calcutta.

But a day or two later, learning that the rumours were false, he was angered afresh. He ordered the army of Roy Dullub, which had gone to the aid of the French but had been treacherously restrained, to fall back on the plain of Plassey and there await developments.

CHAPTER XIX

The Doomed Nawab

I

It was five months since Clive had sailed from Madras for Calcutta. Lawrence, regarded as too old to lead the expedition, was struggling bravely with the files and despatches of governance in Fort St. David. Clive, not unnaturally, was eager to return to his duties and to what was his home in India, the house in which Mrs. Clive patiently awaited his homecoming. But he realized that, with Bussy on the march towards Bengal and Suraj-ud-Dowlah still making ardent overtures to the French, it would be folly to leave this province. In a few swift strokes all that had been achieved by blood and bribe would be undone. France would rise again upon the banks of the Hughli. The Nawab would pickle a new rod for Britain. Clive felt he must remain in Bengal until, as he told Pigot, we "settle everything here in the most advantageous manner for the Company, and perhaps induce the Nabob to give up all the French factorys. This will be driving them out root and branch. My inclinations always tend towards the Coast; and I hope to be with you, with a very considerable force, in September".

Clive regarded the capture of Chandernagore as of more consequence "than the taking of Pondicherry itself"; but Law still exercised his influence at the Court of Murshidabad, and there remained small French agencies dotted about the province. Within six days of seizing Chandernagore Clive began his campaign against these smaller stations. He informed Suraj-ud-Dowlah: "It is almost impossible that there can be a lasting peace in your kingdom while there are two such powerful nations in it, because whenever a war breaks out between our two Kings they would not fail to extend the effects of it to these parts, endeavouring to drive each other from the Settlements in Bengal . . . All these circumstances make it absolutely necessary that Your Excellency should deliver up to us the persons and effects of the French at Cossimbazar, and their out-Settlements, as being our enemies. We shall be without rivals, and our whole force ready to obey your commands, and assist you in punishing all those who dare to molest the peace of your kingdom."

But the Nawab had no intention of leaving the English without rivals. More frantically than ever now he urged Bussy, whom he called "The Distinguished of the Empire, the Sword of Riches, the Victorious in War", to come to the aid of his countrymen. Meanwhile Clive, learning that the French Governor and Council from Chandernagore had sought refuge in the Dutch settlement of Chinsurah, wrote stern letters charging them with a breach of parole and calling on the Dutch to surrender them. Unwilling to be drawn into the dispute, the Dutch complied. The Frenchmen were escorted to Calcutta and cast into prison.

Playing for time, the timorous, vacillating Suraj-ud-Dowlah, cursing the 'perfidy' of the English in every letter he sent Bussy, strove to temporize with us. He was as evasive as he had been over Chandernagore. But Clive was firm and persistent. He despised and mistrusted the Nawab. He had a contempt for his cowardice. He realized that sternness, accompanied by a show of force, would most readily bring Suraj-ud-Dowlah to compliance.

But the Indian was cunning. He made a show of compliance. He told Watts that he had ordered the French out of his dominions; actually he had begged Law to go no farther than Patna but to await there any summons that might be sent.

Clive saw through the ruse. To counter it he strove to strengthen our garrison at Cossimbazar and to have two thousand troops in readiness at Patna. These new schemes made the young Nawab very angry. He threatened Watts with violence. He turned our vakil¹ out of his durbar. "I will destroy them and their nation," he was heard to mutter. "Twice a week," wrote Clive, "he threatens to impale Mr. Watts. He is a compound of everything that is bad and is universally hated and despised by the great men."

Realizing that the time had come for action, Clive informed Watts that "after the Nabob's last message I cannot depend upon his friendship, and therefore shall get everything ready for a march . . . notwithstanding I shall write the Nabob in high terms." This he did, stating: "Trust me and I will be faithful unto you to the last, but remember that if you have given ear to my enemies and are resolved to break through the articles of agreement, you will become responsible for all the blood that shall be spilled, and all the mischief that shall be done."

It was the doom of Suraj-ud-Dowlah, and he seemed to sense

¹Legal representative.

it for he ordered his Commander-in-Chief Mir Jaffar to join Roy Dullub at Plassey, with a force of 15,000 men.

2

It was obvious now to all observers that the English were dissatisfied with the rule of Suraj-ud-Dowlah, a man on whose word none could rely, a man who through his cowardice could be driven or drawn into any folly. It was obvious also that the English were strong enough to remove him if they chose. So to the English came whispered intrigues for the Nawab's deposition, for many of his nobles were eager "to be rid of such a government", since the Nawab's "character of ferocity kept them in continual alarms, and whose fickleness of temper made them tremble".¹

The best of the available alternatives was Mir Jaffar, the Commander-in-Chief, whom Suraj-ud-Dowlah had just despatched with his army to Plassey. Jaffar had ability and character. Son-in-law of the previous Nawab, he was maturer in experience than his nephew Suraj-ud-Dowlah, and unquestionably the better fitted to rule. And he was eager for the opportunity, for he himself approached the English through an Armenian merchant named Petros.

Our chief agent in this intrigue with Jaffar was William Watts, a member of the Calcutta Council as well as our representative at the Nawab's Court. A man of shrewd understanding, charming manners, a knowledge of oriental languages and an insight into native character, he had of late been subjected to threats of increasing severity. To assist him Clive sent Luke Scrafton, a man of even sterner fibre. Working closely with these two was Omichand, who had already played his appointed role in earlier acts, for and against us.

The Nawab, meanwhile, the responses from Bussy encouraging and the danger of Afghan invasion at an end, became, as Watts observed, distinctly 'uppish'. He expressed annoyance that the English army should remain encamped at Chandernagore and ready for service; so Watts advised Clive to "order your army to Calcutta and keep only a garrison in Chandernagore, and appear to give up all thought of war, and send your people nowhere but keep quiet".

The counsel was good and Clive adopted it. At the same time he wrote the Nawab a soothing letter stating: "Yesterday my army broke up their camp; more than half is gone to Calcutta, the rest remain at

¹*Sair Mutaqherin*, by Gholam Hossein Yshan, a contemporary Indian diarist.

Chandernagore. Calcutta is a place of such misery since your army has almost destroyed it, that there is not room for more soldiers without endangering their lives by sickness. However, further to satisfy you, I shall order down to Calcutta all my field cannon. I expect to hear that your army has retired likewise to Muxadavad¹ and that you have been as expeditious in performing what you promised as I have."

The letter was smeared elaborately with guile, as cunning a contrivance of duplicity as an oriental would love to devise. "To take away all suspicion," Clive informed Watts, "I have ordered all the artillery and tumbrels to be embarked in boats and sent to Calcutta." The truth was: "I am ready and will engage to be at Niesaray in twelve hours after I receive your letter, which place is to be the rendezvous of the whole army. The Major² who commands in Calcutta has all ready to embark at a minute's warning. Tell Meer Jaffair to fear nothing, that I will join him with 5,000 men who never turned their backs and that if he fails seizing him³ we shall be strong enough to drive him out of the country. Assure him I will march night and day to his assistance and stand by him as long as I have a man left."

But the 'soothing' letter did not have the desired effect upon the Nawab, who still maintained his army in the field at Plassey and continued his correspondence with Bussy as earnestly and as hopefully as ever.

Clive, meanwhile, was confronted with innumerable difficulties by the Governor, Drake, and the Select Committee at Calcutta, who insisted that all letters concerning the Company's affairs should be answered by them and not by Clive alone. But Clive realized that Drake was spineless and vacillatory. So he had to undertake the triple task of watching and guiding an intricate intrigue, of placating the Select Committee, and of winning the support of Admiral Watson, who had already begun to betray his unwillingness to be made a party to a revolutionary enterprise for the deposition of the appointed ruler.

3

So far, despite his share of the prize when he smote the pirates at Gheriah, Clive had not profited during the eighteen months he had

¹Murshidabad, the Nawab's capital.

²Kilpatrick.

³The Nawab.

been back in India. His losses at the sack of Calcutta were heavy, as he wrote to tell his father. Some of his money had earlier been left in India for investment and a large part of this had since disappeared. With parental concern the elder Clive, on receipt of this intelligence, instantly engaged the interest of a shareholder of the East India Company and induced him to present a motion to the Court of Proprietors for the grant of a special sum of £6,000 to Clive to mark their appreciation of the services he had rendered.

The motion was introduced, but the directors threw it out. They declared that Clive had ample opportunities for acquiring a fortune in the course of his service in India. This attitude was communicated to Clive. His employers had themselves, with a flourish, indicated the road to opportunity. It was there for him to take. And Clive, learning this, was resolved to take it.

Mir Jaffar promised the English that, on becoming Nawab, he would round up all the French fugitives, destroy their factories, and never again permit them to settle in these provinces. He undertook to confirm all our privileges and to give us additional land around Calcutta. Compensation was also promised for the losses both of the Company and of private individuals at the sack of Calcutta by Suraj-ud-Dowlah. He further entered into a private engagement, which Clive urged Watts to obtain in writing, promising to pay large sums of money as gifts to the Select Committee and to the army and navy. Clive stood to benefit doubly from these. His total share was estimated at no less than a quarter of a million sterling.

But a difficulty arose with regard to Omichand who had a hand in the intrigue. Mir Jaffar declared that he mistrusted him and insisted that these additional conditions should not be revealed to Omichand. No doubt, aware of the man's avarice, he feared that Omichand would demand an equally exorbitant sum for himself. Our position was embarrassing. To withhold anything from Omichand at this stage would serve only to arouse his suspicions and estrange him.

Yet Watts felt that these details would have to be withheld in view of Mir Jaffar's insistence. Omichand, however, through subterranean channels acquired a knowledge of everything and upbraided Watts with his duplicity. He accused the English of employing him yet denying him a share in the reward. Then, his heavy lids closing on his soft, cunning eyes, he hinted at the consequences of Suraj-ud-Dowlah learning all that was afoot.

Watts was aghast. If Suraj-ud-Dowlah knew, it would mean death to every Englishman within reach. It would mean the suppression of the Company's trade in Bengal. For his silence Omichand demanded the vast sum of two million pounds. It was obvious that Mir Jaffar, already faced with large disbursements amounting in all to three million sterling, would not, could not, undertake to pay out any more from what one now began to suspect was not a limitless treasury.

CHAPTER XX

Duplicity

I

WATTS was greatly perturbed. Without delay he communicated the news to Clive, who was still in Chandernagore, awaiting an opportune hour for marching northward against the Nawab. Now suddenly everything seemed on the brink of collapse.

With Watt's letter Clive hurried to Calcutta. A special meeting of the Select Committee was called. The two Admirals, Watson and Pocock, were invited to attend.

Throughout that twenty-one-mile journey to Calcutta, Clive searched his mind for a way out. At first he was disposed to offer Omichand a percentage of the money he himself was to receive; then, angry at this attempt at blackmail, he felt it would be far better not to reward but to punish Omichand. The Indian's villainy should be undermined. But, so long as it remained in Omichand's power to use our secret for our destruction, it was obvious that no open action could be employed. The most effective means, it seemed to Clive, would be to promise Omichand money, but not pay it. In order to give that promise the full semblance of inviolability, it would be necessary, he knew, to couch it in the form of a treaty with Mir Jaffar—a false treaty, differing from the real merely in this clause concerning Omichand.

Clive outlined his proposal to the Committee. All leapt at it with avidity. It was recorded in the minutes that "as Omichand is a dangerous man and yet not likely to be of any use to us, decided to deceive him by a double treaty".

Watts, on his own initiative, had asked Mir Jaffar for £300,000 for Omichand, but Jaffar had refused it. Still in the hope of persuading him, Watts had included this sum in the draft of terms drawn up for Clive and the Select Committee. But it was struck out in Calcutta. Writing to Watts, Clive said: "I have your last letter including the articles of agreement. I must confess the tenor of them surprised me much. I immediately repaired to Calcutta and at a committee held, both the admirals and generals agreed that Omichand was the greatest

villain upon earth, and that now he appears in the strongest light what he was always suspected to be, a villain in grain; however to counter-plot this scoundrel, and at the same time give him no room to suspect our intentions, enclosed you will receive two forms of agreement, the one real, and to be strictly kept up by us, the other fictitious. In short this affair once concluded Omichand will be treated as he deserves—this you will acquaint Meer Jaffier with.”

The real treaty was drawn up on white paper; the other on red. Both were signed by all the other members of the Select Committee and by Clive. Watson, as head of the navy and senior officer of the King, signed the real treaty; he refused to sign the other.

But Clive had grown accustomed to last-minute surprises from him of this kind.

2

Watson was the son of a clergyman, Dr. John Watson, Prebendary of Westminster. The intervention of a well-placed uncle who had acquired the influential office of First Lord of the Admiralty, assisted the young seaman to attain the dignity of Admiral with astounding rapidity. Even now he was barely in his forties. Plump, chubby-faced, with large, innocent eyes and a small mouth that was almost a pout, he did not suggest the obstinacy and hot-headedness that he repeatedly betrayed. He seemed kindly, and so he was. He was also interfering. Once in Fort St. David he tried to prevent an Indian widow from sacrificing her life in *suttee*. He promised, if she chose to live, to protect her from the priests and from the resentment of her dead husband's relatives, and to provide for her so amply that she could be assured of comfort for the rest of her life. But love, tradition or fear prevailed; the woman refused. Trembling, she spread herself upon her husband's corpse and clasped it. Firewood was piled above her and a light applied. Then the priests set up a wild chant to drown the woman's agonized cries.

After the capture of Gheriah, the Admiral displayed his humanity by sending his own surgeon, Ives, to attend the wife and children of the pirate chief Angria, who had, in his haste to save his own life, deserted them, stricken as they were with smallpox. Ives prescribed for them and brought bottles of medicine every day, but the patients, from motives of suspicion or caste prejudice, merely poured the medicines out into a drain. None the less they all recovered. They

preferred their own primitive treatment, smearing the body with hot ashes, which has the virtue of not leaving any marks when the scabs peel off.

Watson also possessed a conscience. It was this, he explained, that kept him from signing the fictitious treaty. Conscience would not permit him to be a party to such bluff. Yet he had no scruples about sharing in the prize of intrigue; for there was a large financial provision for him as well as for Clive in the agreement drawn up with Mir Jaffar. Watson did not suggest that his share should be handed over to placate Omichand. He was anxious to participate in the profits, but would take no hand in the subterfuge. He was prepared to endanger the future of his nation, the trading interests of the Company, but he was not prepared to risk the salvation of his soul, which was already endangered by the proffered price of his treachery against the Nawab. He refused to sign the bogus treaty.

Clive was exasperated beyond endurance by this obstinacy. He was aware that Omichand knew too much to be deceived by a treaty that did not bear Watson's signature. In his close contacts with the English Omichand had already observed the effect of Watson's past obstinacies. The delays they had caused. The futility of contracts made without his consent. Omichand was shrewd. The English could not afford to excite his suspicions. It was imperative that Watson's signature should appear on the document. It was not an official document. Did it matter then if Watson's signature too was not official? It would merely serve to impress, and, what was more important, to silence one whom even Watson regarded as 'the greatest villain upon earth'. So, to counteract Watson's disastrous conscience, Clive forged the Admiral's signature on the false treaty.

Clive met oriental treachery with treachery. He fought Omichand with the villainy that the Indian himself practised and was about to employ again. It was the strategy of the field in diplomacy. It was the diplomacy of the age and of the Orient. Clive saw no wrong in it, nor did he attempt later to conceal it. His directors neither condemned nor criticized him for what he had done. They benefited and so eventually did the British nation.

3

What Clive planned to gain in personal profit from this manoeuvre was unquestionably plunder, though scarcely more *villa nous*

than the blackmail of boyhood that spared the windows of shopkeepers in return for apples and ha'pence; for it was plunder sanctioned by custom and the bold, indicative flourishes of his employers. But, whereas moderation had ruled his earlier selection of prizes, Clive's ardour now supplied his share with fantastic proportions. The money was there, thrust at him by opportunity.

But let this not be confused with the part he played in the deception of Omichand. That was a political manœuvre, inevitable whether Clive profited from it or not. Have we not sacrificed individuals before for the good of the many—the men who have been shot during a war for cowardice? Have we not, too, practised deception in the name of propaganda?

CHAPTER XXI

Preparation

I

OMICHAND at this time was with Suraj-ud-Dowlah. He was not sure whether the English meant to yield or to resist him. So he felt it would be advantageous to remain near the Nawab, in order that, if the emergency arose, it would be possible for him to betray the conspiracy. In the meantime, to give the English a hint of his intentions and to present the Nawab with a proof of his sincerity, he hinted at the possibility of a conspiracy between the English and Mir Jaffar. There was nothing yet, he said, but there could be. Suraj-ud-Dowlah trembled at the thought. He thanked and even rewarded Omichand and, as a safeguard, recalled Mir Jaffar from Plassey. A few days later he dismissed Jaffar from the command of his army, and had guards posted all round his house. Spies watched to see who went in and out.

Watts was in a dilemma. Jaffar had not yet signed the two treaties. An interview with him was essential. Equal to the emergency, Watts decided to travel in a curtained *palanquin* such as women use. He knew that none dared peer inside and risk violating a woman's modesty. The ruse succeeded. He was carried thus past the spies, right into Mir Jaffar's harem.

The interview took place in the presence of Jaffar's son and heir, Miran. Jaffar was a slim elderly man with a neat grey beard and large, dull, bulging eyes, set close above a vigorous aquiline nose. He agreed to the terms and the donations. He then swore on the Koran, placing that sacred book on his own head and his hand on the head of his son, that he would solemnly perform all the conditions set down in the papers, which Watts, to emphasize their full purport, held open before him for the oath.

Then, just as he had been borne in, Watts was smuggled out in the *palanquin*.

2

It was now necessary, Watts felt, to lure Omichand away from the capital. He whispered to that slippery Indian that in view of what

was to occur, Calcutta would be a safer refuge and promised Omichand that upon his arrival there he would be shown the treaty guaranteeing him the sum of £300,000. But Omichand was anxious to extract from Suraj-ud-Dowlah, while still he had the means to pay it, the sum of four lakhs of rupees as compensation for the damage done to his house in Calcutta at the time of the sack. He played vigorously upon the Nawab's fears, leaving Watts in despair as to what might next be divulged. At the same time, the cunning Hindu strove to placate Watts with lies. He explained that he had revealed nothing, but had gulled the Nawab into believing that the English and the French had made their peace and were to join forces for his destruction.

The Nawab paid the compensation demanded, for Omichand insisted on receiving the money at once. "He was till ten o'clock at night receiving it," Watts informed Clive in a letter.

Even then Omichand left Murshidabad with reluctance. To ensure his departure, Watts ordered Scrafton to accompany Omichand, but the Indian gave him the slip at Cossimbazar. After a search Scrafton found him trying to squeeze still more money out of the Nawab's treasurer. But the effort proved unsuccessful, and the two men set out again for Calcutta. Near Plassey, where the Nawab's army was still drawn up in battle order, Omichand again eluded his companion.

He was missing for some time, but returned aggrieved. He said he had been to see Roy Dullub, the Chancellor of the Nawab and a general in the army. Dullub was associated with Mir Jaffar in the conspiracy, and Omichand had gone to inquire of him if there was any mention in the treaty of money for Omichand. Roy Dullub swore there was not.

Scrafton was embarrassed at this revelation, but explained that there were two treaties of which one, for obvious reasons, had not been revealed to Roy Dullub. He assured Omichand that when they reached Calcutta this treaty guaranteeing the payment to him of £300,000 would be shown him. So they proceeded to Calcutta.

A few days later Watts realized that it was time he left too. But he did not wish to draw attention to his departure. He set out accordingly first for Cossimbazar, as if on a visit to the English factory there. He was joined by three other Englishmen. The four mounted their horses in the evening and left with dogs and dog-keepers as though to exercise the animals. They even ordered supper for their return. But they did not come back.

A few miles out, the dogs and keepers were sent back and the four

Englishmen rode for their lives. At midnight they came upon the Nawab's troops at Plassey, but luckily the sentries were asleep. Watts hurriedly purchased some boats and, leaving the horses on the bank, rowed madly down the river for Calcutta. He found Clive and his army already on the march and joined them.

3

Clive had set out from Chandernagore on the 13th of June, 1757. Watts's flight had been timed to coincide with this. A few hours after learning that Watts had gone, the Nawab received a letter from Clive suggesting that the points outstanding between them should be submitted to the arbitration of Mir Jaffar, Roy Dullub and others, on whose decision Clive already knew he could rely.

"If it should appear," wrote Clive, "that I have deviated from the treaty I bind myself to give up all my demands. But if it should appear Your Excellency has deviated from it, I shall demand satisfaction for all our losses, and all the charges of the navy and army. The rains being daily encreasing, and it taking a great deal of time to receive your answer, I therefore find it necessary to wait on you immediately, and if you will place confidence on me no harm shall come from it. I represent this to you as a friend. Act as you please."

What the Nawab had been striving hard not to believe, because its purport seemed so terrifying, he realized now must be true. The English were conspiring to dethrone him. Who else was in the conspiracy he was not sure. Jaffar, he felt, might be one. He had his ex-Commander-in-Chief already under close observation. Mir Jaffar was in effect his prisoner. His first impulse now was to attack the traitor's palace and seize him, but he checked the impulse. That act, he feared, might serve as a signal for revolt. His army may rally round their old leader. Suraj-ud-Dowlah preferred to employ safer tactics. He would call on Jaffar and try to win him over by pleading.

It was a touching reconciliation. The Koran was brought in for fresh pledges. Mir Jaffar swore that he would be faithful and would fight for the Nawab with the last drop of his blood. Suraj-ud-Dowlah swore that he would stand by Jaffar. The ex-Commander-in-Chief was thereupon reinstated with full honours.

The Nawab then ordered the rest of his army to Plassey, where Roy Dullub had been in an entrenched position for nearly three

months. But the army refused to leave the capital. Money had not been paid them for months and they declined to budge until all arrears had been settled. For three days Murshidabad was in an uproar. Suraj-ud-Dowlah, seeing that persuasion would not avail, made a handsome distribution to the mutineers, and the rest of the army set out for Plassey.

The Nawab also sent an affecting letter to Law, whom he had sent away from his capital to please the English. He begged Law to hurry to his aid. It was the summons for which he had asked the French to wait at Patna.

CHAPTER XXII

Anxiety

I

CLIVE was far from easy in his mind. He had left behind for the defence of Calcutta and to guard the French prisoners there, a mere handful of invalid Europeans. He was marching with all the available forces, numbering under 3,000, to challenge the entire might of the Nawab. If Mir Jaffar could be relied upon, all should be well. But Clive was beginning to wonder if Jaffar intended honouring his pledges. That there had been a reconciliation between Jaffar and the Nawab, Omichand had already taken care to inform him.

As early as the 29th of May, Clive's anxiety had begun to betray itself. Watson, who was to take no part in the coming battle beyond supplying fifty or sixty sailors, noticed it in Clive's letters and observed: "I do not think your letters carry the most promising appearance of success; you cannot therefore be too cautious to prevent a false step being taken, which might be of very fatal consequences to our affairs."

Watson knew, the Select Committee knew, the entire white population of Calcutta knew what disaster waited upon that false step against which the Admiral warned Clive. If the troops with whom Clive now marched were destroyed, we would be left in Bengal without any defence against the wrath of the Nawab, the designs of the French, or the aggression of any band of armed marauders who chose to prey on prosperous merchants. Clive was playing for high stakes, and the game was charged with the gravest danger.

Of his army of 3,000 less than a third were white men. Some of these belonged to Aldercron's refractory regiment, the 39th Foot (now the Dorsetshire), which he had refused to place under Clive's command. But Admiral Watson, appreciating the difficulties, had a few weeks earlier granted Clive full control. Also with him were sepoy from Madras, others newly recruited in Bengal, and a hundred half-castes. His artillery consisted of eight six-pounders and two small howitzers. The Nawab, he knew, had 40,000 men in the infantry alone, besides 20,000 cavalry; fifty-three guns chiefly of large calibre, manned by Frenchmen; and a train of elephants and camels. There was also a small

Mr. Warren Hastings
at Maraurbaug

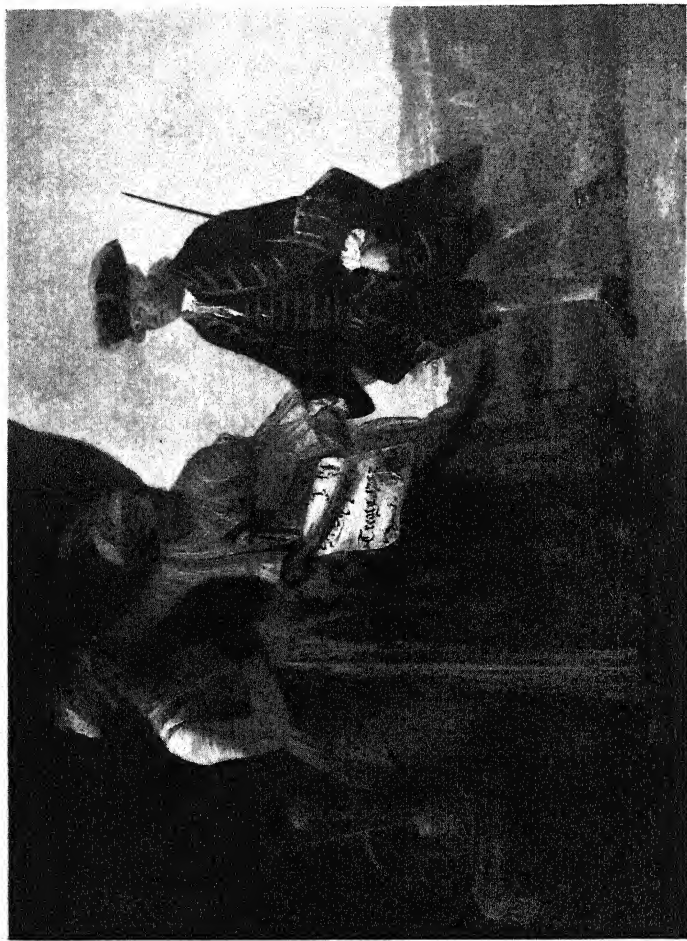
S

Omichund has left this place
without permission, and I just now hear
of his being got to Bombay. I desire You
would on the receipt hereof send out
Mecanaks on search of him, with
© directions to apprehend him, wherever
they can meet with him.

Calcutta,
13th Aug 1758
at noon

Yours most humble
servant
Robert Clive

Facsimile of a letter from Clive to Warren Hastings. Now in the
British Museum.



(By kind permission of the Commonwealth Relations Office)

Mr. William Watts, representing Clive, hands the Treaty to Mir Jaffar (left) and his son Miran, prior to the Battle of Plassey in 1757. (From a painting by John Zoffany.)

detachment of Frenchmen, who, Clive realized, would prove the stoutest fighters.

An augmentation of his own forces Clive expected from Mir Jaffar who had promised to join him with troops at Kutwa; but, as he approached their place of meeting, Clive received nothing but excuses from the Indian. "On the news of your coming," wrote Mir Jaffar, "the Nabob was much intimidated, and requested at such a juncture I would stand his friend. On my part, agreeable to the circumstances of the times, I thought it advisable to acquiesce with his request, but what we have agreed on must be done. God willing I shall arrive."

Clive sent Eyre Coote ahead to storm and take the fort at Kutwa, and at the same time despatched a note to Jaffar urging him to 'write me daily and fully'. Clive wished to be informed of every move. He was concerned also for the safety of Mir Jaffar. Suraj-ud-Dowlah might be playing a subtle game, professing to trust Jaffar merely to lead Clive on. "Of all things," Clive advised, "take care of yourself that you be not undone by treachery before my arrival."

The next day Clive arrived at Kutwa, which Coote had succeeded in taking. Jaffar was not there to keep the appointment. Nor were the 10,000 troops Jaffar had promised to bring over.

2

What now was the next move? Should Clive proceed without Jaffar and cross the river while it was still fordable, for the monsoon had already broken and the waters were rising rapidly? Yet, if he did, the risk would be most grave, for, with the river swollen into a roaring torrent behind them, retreat would be impossible. Or should he wait here in Kutwa, where enough rice had been found to feed for a year an army three times the size of Clive's? Yet, how long could he wait? He knew the Nawab had appealed for help to Law. The French were already on the march with all their available strength. The decision was difficult.

Again and again Clive tried to rouse Mir Jaffar to action. He wrote innumerable letters. "It gives me great concern," said Clive, "that in an affair of so great consequence to yourself in particular that you do not exert yourself more. So long as I have been on my march you have not yet given me the least information what measures it is necessary

for me to take, nor do I know what is going forward at Muxadavad. Surely it is in your power to send me news daily; it must be more difficult for me to procure trusty messengers than you. . . . I shall wait here till I have proper encouragement to proceed. I think it absolutely necessary that you should join my army as soon as possible."

The same day, in a letter to the Select Committee, Clive confessed: "I feel the greatest anxiety at the little intelligence I receive from Meer Jaffair, and if he is not treacherous, his *sangfroid* or want of strength will I fear upset the expedition. I am trying a last effort by means of the Braminy¹ to prevail upon him to march out and join us. I have appointed Plassey the place of *rendezvous*, and have told him at the same time without he gives me this or some other sufficient proof of the sincerity of his intentions, I will not cross the river. This I hope will meet with your approbation. I shall act with such caution as not to risk the loss of our forces, and whilst we have them, we may always have it in our power to bring about a revolution, should the present not succeed."

Mir Jaffar sent his reply sewn up in a pair of slippers. He said: "Tomorrow the day of the Id² by the blessing of God I shall march. I shall have my tent fixed to the right or left of the army. I have hitherto been afraid to send you intelligence. After I am arrived in the army mutual intelligence will be easier, but here the Nabob had fixed chokeys³ on all the roads. Your letters come too open to me. I hope that till our affairs are publicly declared you will be very careful."

Jaffar was aware of the ferocity of Suraj-ud-Dowlah. He had seen it in full play against others and, in a measure, against himself. In his fierce passion Suraj had spat in the faces of aged and respected nobles and had them beaten before the entire Court. Others had been cruelly tortured to death. Jaffar preferred to be cautious.

3

Clive sat in the mango grove, his chin in his hand, his elbow on his knee. The trees were in fruit, which hung down in gilded ripeness.

But Clive's thoughts were not of mangoes. Sheltering here from the fierce noonday sun, which was lightly veiled by monsoon clouds, he turned over and over again in his mind the question: "Shall I go forward? Dare I go forward?"

¹Brahmin.

²Festival.

³Guards.

That morning he had sought the advice of his officers, summoned together in conference. By a majority of over 50 per cent they had warned him not to go on. But Clive was not of their mind. He felt, in his innermost consciousness, that the risk might be worth taking. But the stakes were too high. He was gambling with the future of Empire. Apart altogether from personal profit, which was an incidental and not the actuating force, Clive realized what success would mean to the nation; and what failure would mean to the settlement.

He rose and paced the grove uneasily. The earth was soft under his feet and clung to his field-boots. Butterflies flitted in wondrous hues about him. The air was shrill with the cry of birds.

The decision could not be made by the toss of a coin or by omens. It had to be carefully weighed, and although this had been done in concert by his officers, Clive despised, though he had inspired, the 'safety first' issue of their deliberation.

He would go on. He must go on.

Leaving the grove, his strides more confident, his air more definite, Clive walked back to the camp. He saw Eyre Coote and Captain Campbell, and stopped them.

"I have decided," he said briefly, "to go on. We shall cross the river tomorrow morning."

4

But the troops did not cross the next morning. Again Clive hesitated.

At three that afternoon they were still at Kutwa when an express message from Mir Jaffar was brought to Clive.

"The Nabob's intention," it stated, "is to have his intrenchment at Moncurra¹, therefore the sooner you march to fall on him the better before his design can take place. As yet you are now only designing, but it is not now proper to be indolent. When you come near I shall then be able to join you. . . . When I am arrived near the army I will send you privately all the intelligence. Let me have previous notice of the time you intend to fight."

Clive decided to throw caution to the winds. Within two hours his army began to cross the river to join Jaffar at Plassey.

¹A village just south of Cossimbazar.

CHAPTER XXIII

Plassey

I

THE irrevocable step had been taken. There could be no going back now. During the eight-hour march with his army, through drenching rain, their feet held by the mud, their limbs chilled and weary, Clive's thoughts were with the future. Success would bring the realization of his dreams. He would achieve what he had longed for ever since Dupleix had set the example. Their methods were similar. Dupleix too had set up a new Nawab, of equal magnitude, ruler of all Southern India, and had wrung from him vast tracts of territory for his nation and large gifts of money for himself. The foundation of Empire that Dupleix strove to lay in the South, Clive knew, with success, he could achieve here. The alternative was humiliation and extinction. It was the hour of zero. His doubts still disturbed him. He could not be sure of Mir Jaffar.

At one o'clock in the morning they found themselves at Plassey. Here Jaffar had promised to meet him. Together they were to go on to Moncurra to surprise the Nawab.

The rain still fell, though not so heavily. There were distant sounds in the air, as of thunder; but when the rain ceased Clive, who had been posting his guards while his men slept, detected that the distant sounds were of drums. The beat of drums that, with its irritant monotony, stirs the Indian to battle. Mingled with it was the clash of cymbals. Not Mir Jaffar, but the entire army of the Nawab was less than a mile distant. Had Jaffar been false then? Had he led Clive deliberately into this trap? Or had he been unable to elude the suspicious Suraj-ud-Dowlah, who may have thought it safer not to let the man out of his sight? Clive wondered; and prepared for battle.

2

The rising sun illumined the field that was by evening to be covered with dead and enshrined in history. It picked out the scarlet

cloth and embroidery of the Nawab's elephants and flashed fire from the drawn swords of His Excellency's cavalry. The ancestral standards of Suraj-ud-Dowlah fluttered above the terrifying line of heavy guns, levelled across the field at the grove of 100,000 mango trees in which Clive's small army crouched and at the Nawab's own hunting lodge which Clive had commandeered as his headquarters.

The French gunners opened the battle with a severe bombardment. Clive waited in vain for the promised move from Mir Jaffar. Two other enemy commanders, Roy Dullub and Lutf Khan, were with us in the conspiracy; and, could Clive have relied upon their promises, the day might have been regarded as already won. But they were guided by timidity and had either abandoned at the eleventh hour their earlier pledges to us, or were waiting to range themselves, like the gods, on the side of the victorious. Clive, scanning the long, formidable crescent of men drawn up against him, noticed that the Nawab's entire army held together. There was not the slightest sign of defection.

The cannonade continued ceaselessly, intent on dealing death and destruction. Our own far lighter guns made little impression. Clive ordered his men to lie down behind the mud bank that encircled the grove; and the enemy's shots snapped off the branches of the mango trees above and the fruit fell harmlessly, if a little squelchily, upon them.

Little more damage than this was wrought by the enemy. Meanwhile we advanced some of our guns, and, playing them with success, contrived to pick out Mir Murdeen, chief of the few commanders who remained loyal to Suraj-ud-Dowlah. He was carried off the field mortally wounded.

Clive's intention was to lie low in the mango grove until nightfall and then surprise the enemy with a raid in the darkness. But four hours later the monsoon, intermittent in its incidence, revisited them with torrential vehemence. The enemy's powder, being exposed, was drenched. But our guns continued to play briskly, unanswered; for we had taken the precaution of covering our field-pieces with tarpaulins.

At the height of the storm tragedy was being enacted in the tent of the young, unhappy ruler. His face was pale and drawn as he gazed down, with tired, sunken eyes, at his dying general, Mir Murdeen, the only man on whose loyalty he had felt he could really rely. Slowly the life ebbed out. Before the storm had ceased Suraj-ud-Dowlah was without his chief supporter. In despair, he clutched again at one of his

own kin, the uncle with whom he had played in childhood, Mir Jaffar, about whom ugly stories had of late been whispered, tales of treachery that had made the young Prince tremble. Perhaps they were not true. Perhaps the uncle would be touched by one last pitiful appeal. To whom else could Suraj-ud-Dowlah turn now?

He sent for Mir Jaffar. Tearing off the royal turban the young, dissipated weakling cast it at the elderly general's feet, and with thin, limp arms outstretched in supplication, sought in a tremulous voice at once his respect and his pity. "Jaffar," he cried, "that turban you must defend!"

The uncle, not shaken from his treacherous resolve, yet cautious not to reveal himself too soon, crossed his arms solemnly on his breast, and, bowing his head low before the trembling Prince, vowed he would exert himself to his utmost to save him. Calmed by this gesture of loyalty, Suraj-ud-Dowlah thanked Mir Jaffar abjectly again and again; but the moment he was out of the Nawab's sight, Jaffar galloped off to write to Clive of what had occurred. "Attack at three o'clock in the morning," he urged. But the messenger was frightened and Clive did not get the letter until the battle was over.

3

Suraj-ud-Dowlah, after his interview with his uncle sought assurances from the other treacherous commanders. Roy Dullub advised him to withdraw his army to the line of entrenchments. Ill with fear, not knowing whom to trust, the wretched Prince acted on this advice.

Clive, unaware of what was happening on the other side and not sure how much the traitors could be relied upon, kept his men on the defensive behind their embankment and retired to the hunting lodge to change his sodden clothes.

Just then Major Kilpatrick, Clive's second in command, observed that the enemy were falling back to their entrenchments. The French alone kept their position. Despatching an officer to inform Clive of it, he dashed forward to attack. Clive, hot-headed and impulsive, was angry that any move should have been made without his orders. He rushed out after Kilpatrick to reprimand him; but, taking in the situation, pressed on with a detachment and sent Kilpatrick back for the rest of the army.

This was the beginning of the end. Suraj-ud-Dowlah mounted

his fleetest camel and fled poste-haste to his palace in Murshidabad. Mir Jaffar, danger no longer attending the manœuvre, detached his division and moved towards Clive; but Clive was taking no chances. He was not sure what the detachment intended to do and opened fire upon it. At this Mir Jaffar halted and remained inactive. The rest of the Nawab's army was in confusion. Some fought on despite their commanders. They rallied round the French, most loyal of all in the Nawab's service, and fired volley after volley at the English. But Clive, with a final effort, charged the French position and took it.

Plassey was won.

Our total losses were seven white men killed and thirteen wounded; sixteen natives killed and thirty-six wounded. The enemy lost over five hundred men, three elephants, many horses, all their guns, baggage, and stores.

To the Select Committee in Calcutta Clive described the battle that changed the history of India in this terse communique, dated the 23rd of June, 1757, a year almost to the day after that ghastly night spent by a hundred and forty-six of his countrymen in the Black Hole of Calcutta:

"Gentlemen,—This morning at one o'clock we arrived at Placis Grove, and early in the morning the Nabob's whole army appeared in sight and cannonaded us for several hours, and about noon returned to a very strong camp in sight, lately Roydoolub's, upon which we advanced and stormed the Nabob's camp which we have taken with all his cannon and pursued him six miles, being now at Doudpoor, and shall proceed to Muxadavad tomorrow. Meer Jaffair, Roydoolub, and Luttee Cawn gave us no other assistance than standing neuter. They are with me with a large force. Meer Muddun and five hundred horse are killed and three elephants. Our loss is trifling, not above twenty Europeans killed and wounded."

Clive's valour and resourcefulness played their part in the victory. His intrigues were of great consequence too. But he took a considerable chance when he marched on Plassey. So, however one views it, the full credit of the victory must be accorded to Clive.

Clive was reminded of his anxiety and his hesitation before Plassey, by a letter received from the Select Committee some days later, in

answer to his note from Kutwa. The Committee said: "Force on a decisive engagement if there is any prospect of success."

To this he sent a caustic reply.

"I have received your letter of the 23rd instant," he wrote, "the contents of which are so indefinite and contradictory that I can put no other construction on it than an intent to clear yourselves at my expense had the expedition miscarried. It puts me in mind of the famous answer of the Delphic oracle to Pyrrhus, '*Aio te Aeacide Romanos vincere posse*'."

CHAPTER XXIV

Britain Triumphant

I

ON the morning after Plassey, Clive sent for Mir Jaffar, who came mounted on an elephant and attended by his son Miran. Jaffar was suspicious. He did not know what Clive's attitude would be. He blushed that he had been kept by timidity from fulfilling his promise, and wondered now if Clive was resentful at his not having joined the English earlier. Still, the victory was Clive's, and Jaffar had taken the precaution of congratulating him promptly.

When Jaffar arrived at Clive's camp he found a guard of honour drawn up. The sudden clash of their muskets as they presented arms made the conspirator start. All through the battle he had been assailed by nerves, and he remembered how at the end Clive had turned the guns upon his men. How far could he rely upon Clive, who, he knew, had drawn up a trick treaty to deceive Omichand?

But as the guard gave their salute, Clive himself appeared and embraced his visitor, hailing him as Nawab of Bengal.

The two then retired and conferred together; and on Clive's advice Mir Jaffar hastened to Murshidabad to prevent Suraj-ud-Dowlah from rallying the people or from plundering the treasury before taking flight.

Jaffar covered the thirty miles to Murshidabad in a few hours.

2

Suraj-ud-Dowlah, arriving late the night before, had spent the day turning over in his troubled mind the conflicting advice of the few loyal men he still had about him. Should he throw himself on the mercy of the English? Or should he make a last stand in his capital? From secret recesses in his palace he produced hidden treasure and paid out large sums to his troops to rally them against the English. But by night news was brought him of Jaffar's arrival.

Betrayed already by most of his generals, Suraj-ud-Dowlah began

to tremble afresh at the mere thought of some new treachery by a kinsman who had vowed to assist him but had failed him. The palace echoed with the weeping and wailing of his women. Their cries floated down to him as he sat irresolute, his pale brow moist with craven sweat.

Suraj-ud-Dowlah could not face it. He felt he could not trust his army. He would join the French. Law, whom he had sent away from his capital, was coming, he knew, and must by now be about half-way to Murshidabad. He counted slowly on his fingers. If he left the palace at once perhaps they might meet at Rajmahal. Yes, he would go out and join Law. The French, at least, he could rely on.

He summoned a eunuch whose hair had whitened in loyal service. Ordering a boat to be brought at nightfall to the edge of the palace grounds, the Nawab retired to his closet and cast off his rich silks and his jewels. He put on instead the simple garb of a workman, his chest bared, his head adorned with a coarse cap. His favourite wife, Lutf-ul-Nissa, was also given a disguise. Together, the two, one the ruler of a province considerably larger than Britain, the other favourite of a dozen queens, let themselves out of a window and stole across the palace grounds to the waiting boat and their faithful eunuch.

Rajmahal lay ninety miles to the north. Travelling ceaselessly by day and by night, the boat sped towards this goal of hope, reaching it in darkness on the fourth day.

The royal fugitives, hungry, tired, landed and took shelter in a deserted garden near the river. At dawn a passing mendicant peering over the wall, observed them. His eyes were sunken, his cheeks hollow, his figure limp, his ears missing. Animation came into his countenance as he gazed at the workman. Surely this was the Nawab who some months before had ordered his ears to be clipped off!

Bitter, resentful, urged by a desire for revenge, the mendicant hurried away and informed Mir Jaffar's brother, Mir Daud, of his discovery. As it happened even the Governor of Rajmahal, Mir Cossim, was a kinsman of Jaffar's.

A strong guard was instantly despatched. The royal fugitives were seized and dragged before Cossim. The queen was stripped of her jewels. The boat was searched, a casket discovered and confiscated. Then the young prince and his wife were taken back to their boat and escorted to Murshidabad in captivity. M. Law, hurrying to join Suraj-ud-Dowlah, was at the time not three hours away.

Four days later Suraj-ud-Dowlah was led through his capital in

chains, like a felon. Crowds came out to gape at him and, though they had cursed him before for his brutality, now they could feel nothing but pity for his wretchedness. The wheel of fate had swung completely round. An hour later he whose voice had made thousands tremble in this very palace was bowing and abasing himself before his uncle: before the man who was still his Commander-in-Chief, and who on the field of Plassey had crossed his arms over the Nawab's turban, vowing to serve him loyally.

With his forehead pressed against the floor, Suraj-ud-Dowlah now begged his former servant for his life. But Mir Jaffar was not prepared to promise him even that. He handed the ex-Nawab over to his son Mir Miran, knowing well the fate in store.

Miran hired an assassin for the murder of his cousin. Accompanied by a guard this man entered the chamber of the royal prisoner. Suraj shrank into a corner when he saw them. "They are not then," he said, in a voice that was weak and broken, "they are not satisfied with my being ready to retire into some corner, there to end my days." Then, searching their faces, he answered himself. "No—they are not—and I must die."

He was not allowed to say more. The assassin, his sabre already drawn, rushed on Suraj-ud-Dowlah and hacked at him, repeatedly to make sure. Some of the strokes fell across the Prince's face, which gaped and bled. Limply, Suraj fell forward mumbling: "Enough—that is enough—I am done for."

The mangled corpse was thrown upon the back of an elephant and led through the winding streets of Murshidabad, to be gaped at from the overhanging balconies, with their lovely carved trellises.

3

Four days before from the same balconies the same crowd had beheld a young Englishman, not yet thirty-two, ride in as a soldier, even as a conqueror, escorted by two hundred armed white men and three hundred sepoys.

They received him in awed silence. They knew it was this Sahib who had given them their new Nawab. And they marvelled at the mystery and might of a mere handful of white men, as Indians were to do for two hundred years afterwards across the entire two thousand miles of the Indian continent.

The royal city of the Nawabs was noble and stately. Beautiful Moorish palaces gleamed white along the river front. In the Mubarak Manzil, the pleasure-gardens of the Nawabs, crocodiles glided in a pearly lake: here a marble throne had been set up to receive the new ruler. The bazaars were laden with rich silks, embroideries and wondrously carved ivory. It was a city of vast wealth. Clive found it "as extensive, populous and rich as the city of London; with this difference, that there are individuals in Murshidabad possessing infinitely greater property than any in London".

A palace was assigned to Clive as his residence. He found in it heaped tributes from the rich men of the city—jewels, gold, costly rugs set with pearls, exquisite pieces of ivory: each was accompanied by a congratulatory message. It was the customary tribute. Rich men felt it was better to give than to be plundered. Centuries of ill-example had converted this spoliation into a tradition. Conquerors and administrators had forced the inhabitants of vast provinces to surrender their gold and their jewels; those who had buried their treasures were ordered to tear up their lands and deliver them. Even the temples were invaded, the idols seized, the precious stones wrenched out of their eyes and borne away in sacks. Clive did not want their gold or their jewels. He sent back all the gifts. He only wanted, he explained, their assistance in establishing the new government.

That afternoon Miran called to conduct him to the investiture, which had been postponed for two days because of a plot against Clive's life that had kept him from entering the city earlier.

The throne-room presented a magnificent scene, ablaze with colour, asparkle with the rich jewels on the turbans of the nobles. They were all assembled in readiness for Clive's coming. Mir Jaffar stepped forward to greet him. Clive was garlanded and sprayed with rose water. In the middle of the room stood the empty throne, which Jaffar refused to ascend until Clive placed him upon it. With a becoming bow the young soldier took the elderly Indian by the hand, and saluting him as Nawab of the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, led him proudly to the throne.

From the steps Clive then addressed the assembled throng: "I only attempted to convince them," he records in his report to the Select Committee, "that it was not the maxims of the English to war against the Government, but that Surajah Dowlat not only would not fulfil the treaty he had entered into with us, but was taking measures by calling in the French to destroy us; but it had pleased God to overthrow

him, and that as the present Nabob was a brave and good man, the country might expect to be quiet and happy under him; that for our parts we should not anyways interfere in the affairs of Government, but leave that wholly to the Nabob; that as long as his affairs required it, we were ready to keep the field, after which we would return to Calcutta and attend solely to commerce, which was our proper sphere and our whole aim in these parts."

4

Jaffar called on Clive the next morning. He had discovered that, through Suraj-ud-Dowlah's extravagance and debauchery, there was not enough money in the treasury with which to meet the promised payments to the British. And he had moreover the expenses of governing the country.

Together they went to the house of Jugget Seit, the banker, where it was arranged, after much discussion, that the payments by Jaffar should be made in instalments. One half he agreed to pay immediately—a part in money and the rest in jewels, plate and merchandise; the remaining half was to be divided into three annual instalments.

Almost as soon as the Nawab had discovered the deplorable state of his exchequer, Omichand knew of it, too; and, wondering how his appointed portion was to be paid, he hurried after Mir Jaffar to the house of Jugget Seit. When Clive and Jaffar emerged from the inner room they found Omichand, patient, expectant, seated amid a host of retainers.

To Scrafton, who was with him, Clive whispered: "It is now time to undeceive Omichand."

Glancing quickly at Clive, Scrafton walked slowly towards the Indian.

"Omichand," he said in Hindustani, his voice lowered, his eyes uneasy, "Omichand, the treaty that was shown you was a trick. You are to receive nothing."

Omichand stared at him vacantly. He did not seem to understand. He found it impossible to grasp what had been said.

"A trick!" he repeated.

Scrafton nodded.

Giddily Omichand swayed, but an attendant sprang forward and caught him in his arms. Unconscious, they carried him from the room

to his *palanquin*. Omichand was still in a dazed state when he arrived at his home.

Tricked! Tricked out of three hundred thousand pounds! The shock was unsettling to his avaricious mind, which had a thousand times in anticipation collected this vast sum. That finely poised, cunning, intricate organism that had contrived so many frauds and treacheries suddenly lost its balance. Omichand raved like a lunatic.

Or he pretended to rave. Many were convinced that he was shamming. "Omichand shams sick," wrote Scrafton, "and swears he has lost faith in man." The Select Committee in Calcutta were terrified at what new mischief his mind might devise. "It would be better," they wrote to Clive, "that Omichand was in Calcutta lest he do prejudice to the cause." Clive, in order to have him out of the way, advised him to undertake a pilgrimage, the approved method in India for a cure. Clive still felt we could use Omichand again. "He is a person capable of rendering you great services while properly restrained, therefore not to be wholly discarded," Clive told the Select Committee.

But more than a year later Omichand was again exciting our concern. In a letter to Warren Hastings at Murshidabad, Clive, writing from Calcutta on the 15th of August, 1758, states: "Omichand has left this place without permission, and I just now hear of his being got to Amboa; I desire you would on the receipt hereof send our hircarrahs¹ in search of him, with directions to apprehend him, wherever they can meet him."

The cunning Hindu died a few months later, bequeathing a part of his vast fortune, either cynically or to stress his insanity, to, of all places, the Foundling Hospital in London.

5

While the mangled form of Suraj-ud-Dowlah was being paraded on an elephant through the streets of Murshidabad, great was the activity on the river, where two hundred boats were being loaded with care in the presence of a strong military guard.

The activity had been in progress for two days. Into each boat was lowered a large chest, firmly fastened and sealed. In each chest was coin of the realm, gold plate and precious gems, the reward of the

¹Spies.

English for the elevation of the new Nawab. A first instalment of a million and half pounds.

Admiral Watson had sent a large naval squadron to act as escort. In the afternoon the boats pushed off, music playing, drums beating, their colours flying. When they passed the French and Dutch settlements, crowds came to the shore to see the enormous prize the English had secured.

But the prize was bigger even than this. The prize was all India, of which this was only an infinitesimal instalment.

CHAPTER XXV

Riches

I

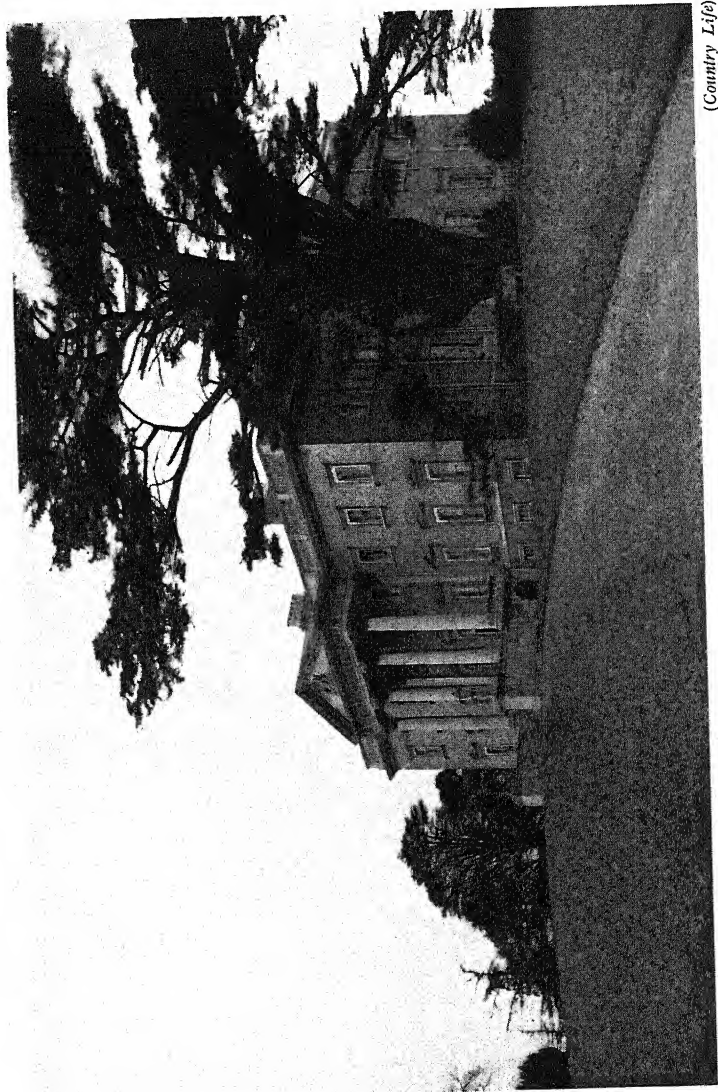
THE jubilation in Calcutta was unbounded. The Black Hole had been avenged; the humiliation we had endured had been wiped off. More, we were masters of our own destiny, for the Nawab was our creature as easily removed as set up. The merchants were at last to receive compensation for their losses at the sack of Calcutta. Even the natives and the Armenians were to benefit. As for the army, the navy, and the members of the Select Committee, who still governed Calcutta pending the decision of the directors in England, there were large monetary gifts for them all in the boats coming down from Murshidabad.

"We talk of great doings on this happy occasion," wrote Captain Latham, Admiral Watson's aide-de-camp, to Clive, "and expect a world of guns to be fired and the ladies all to go footsore with dancing. I can assure you that a bumper goes to your health each day in every house from the Admiral's downwards."

The Select Committee sent Clive an eloquent letter of congratulation, the two Admirals joining heartily in the tribute: "The revolution effected by your gallant conduct, and the bravery of the officers and soldiers under you is of extraordinary importance, not only to the Company, but to the British nation in general; that we think it incumbent to return you and your officers our sincere thanks on behalf of his Britannic Majesty and the East India Company for your behaviour on this critical and important occasion."

Not content with this official message, Watson wrote personally to Clive: "Your letter of the 23rd instant to the Select Committee and myself informing us of your success against Nabob Saraja Dowla has given me the greatest pleasure. Mr. Pocock desires to join with me in congratulating you thereon, and in best wishes for the same good success in all you undertake, that our affairs may be soon happily settled, and a speedy end put to the present trouble."

In their joy old quarrels were forgotten. Clive, acknowledging from Murshidabad this gracious message, informed Watson that the



(Country Life)

Claremont, the house in Surrey which was built for Clive after his second homecoming from India.

Nawab "is preparing a present for you and Admiral Pocock" in addition to the sums of money already agreed on. Clive himself received a personal gift of £160,000 from Mir Jaffar; and large sums were also paid to Watts, Scrafton and Clive's private secretary, Walsh. Watts retired soon afterwards; but his wife, a remarkable woman saved from the harem of the Nawab Suraj-ud-Dowlah after the sack of Cossimbazar, was destined to queen it in Calcutta as Johnson Begum; for on Watts's death she married her fourth husband, a meek, colourless clergyman, and, letting him live in seclusion in England, herself played a lone, spectacular role, entertaining Governors-General and Councillors in her magnificent home. In 1812 as she lay dying at the advanced age of 87, she learned that her grandson and Watts's, the Earl of Liverpool, had just become Prime Minister of England.

Despite the earlier fluttering of his scruple-ridden conscience, Watson was by no means satisfied with the money he received, which was relatively small; after his death his heirs squabbled in the law courts for years, insisting that he should have received a far bigger share.

The directors of the East India Company, hearing of these vast payments to their servants, were not in the least concerned. They declared that they did not intend "to break in upon any sums of money which have been given by the Nawab to particular persons by way of free gift or gratuity for their services". They realized, of course, that they themselves had benefited far more than all their servants put together; for the additional land surrendered to the Company by Mir Jaffar yielded them an income of £150,000 a year.

2

The distribution of the treasure was no easy matter. The army clamoured for an immediate share-out and resented Clive's proposal that the sailors who fought at Plassey should participate in the military apportionment.

A council of war was summoned. Officers were deputed from every branch. All refused to give up any part of their prize money to the naval officers and sailors, few though they were, who had fought side by side with them.

Clive was very angry. He described their attitude as selfish and unjust. He overruled their decision and dismissed the council of war. It was now the officers' turn to be angry. They had been treated, they declared, with contempt. Such treatment was incompatible, they

found, with their dignity as officers of His Majesty the King. They drew up a vigorous protest and had it presented by a deputation to Clive.

But Clive refused to listen to any complaints. He ordered the arrest of the deputation, whose spokesman was sent under escort from Murshidabad to Calcutta.

"Gentlemen," he wrote to the officers of his army, "I have received your remonstrance and protest. Had you consulted the dictates of your own reason, those of justice, or the respect due to your commanding officer, I am persuaded such a paper, so highly injurious to your honour as officers, could never have escaped you.

"You say you were assembled at a council to give your opinion about a matter of property. Pray, Gentlemen, how comes it that a promise of a sum of money from the Nabob, entirely negotiated by me, can be deemed a matter of right of property? So very far from it, it is now in my power to return to the Nabob the money already advanced, and leave it to his option, whether he will perform the promise or not. . . . You have stormed no town, and found the money there; neither did you find it in the plains of Plassey, after the defeat of the Nabob. In short, Gentlemen, it pains me to remind you, that what you are to receive is entirely owing to the care I took of your interest. Had I not interfered greatly in it, you had been left to the Company's generosity, who perhaps would have thought you sufficiently rewarded, in receiving a present of six months' pay; in return for which, I have been treated with the greatest disrespect and ingratitude, and what is still worse, you have flown in the face of my authority for overruling an opinion, which if passed would have been highly injurious to your own reputation, being attended with injustice to the navy, and been of the worst consequences to the cause of the nation and the Company.

"I shall, therefore, send the money down to Calcutta, give directions to the agents of both parties to have it shroffed;¹ and when the Nabob signifies his pleasure (on whom it solely depends) that the money be paid you, you shall receive it and not before.

"Your behaviour has been such, that you cannot expect I should interest myself any further in your concerns. I therefore retract the promise I made the other day, of negotiating either the rest of the Nabob's promise, or the one-third which was to be received in the same manner as the rest of the public money at three yearly equal payments."

¹Assessed at its true value.

The officers apologized at once and withdrew their protests. Their portion of prize-money was too large to risk. The youngest subaltern at Plassey got as much as £3,000; the senior officers considerably more.

3

Clive next despatched Eyre Coote with a body of men to round up the French. Law's small force was already in flight towards the frontier and it was hoped that Coote would be able to overtake it. An excellent soldier, Coote had by his daring and his brilliance lived down the annoyance he had aroused when he refused to hand over Calcutta to Clive.

His march was long and tedious. There were all manner of unforeseen delays which brought forth stern letters of condemnation from Clive. The sepoys, mainly from Madras, began to complain that, already hundreds of miles from their homes, they could not be expected to go any farther. The white troops declared that they had been sent out of the way so that through their death there would be more money to share out among those who survived. Nor did Coote receive much assistance from the people of the country; many of them, indeed, lodged mischievous complaints against him.

"There is," wrote Clive, "such a complaint against you from Seebnautray, the Phousdar of Rajamal's Duan, as had made me blush, though I know not how to give credit to it. He writes the forces had entered their fort, thrown down their guns and nogarras,¹ plundered every part of it, and that the soldiers and sepoys have gone into all the houses in the town, insulted their women and stole their effects. Such behaviour may give the country people a disgust to us and be of the utmost ill consequence to the Company's affairs. I desire that henceforward you will not enter their forts nor take anything from them, not even provisions if to be bought, and that you will have as little connection with country people as possible."

Coote replied that the man who had complained "was a villain and his accusation false", and that the only damage done was through a prank which led some soldiers to fill the barrel of one of the big guns with mud. "Who did it I could not find out nor can I be answerable for such foolish actions."

A French spy was caught and hanged, endless trials were suffered,

¹Big drums.

but Law and his men got across the frontier to safety. A few years later, joining the Nawab of Oudh in his quarrel with the English, Law ventured across the border and was taken prisoner. The family fortunes were not retrieved until a Law of the next generation, born at Pondicherry to the Law who had surrendered to Clive at Trichinopoly, improved a friendship formed at the military academy in France with Napoleon Bonaparte; and became in turn a general in the Napoleonic army, an imperial aide-de-camp, ambassador and the Marquis de Lauriston. Unhampered by the paternal hesitation he entered, after Waterloo, readily into the service of the returning Bourbon, Louis the Eighteenth.

4

Clive was well aware that at Plassey he had made history. He described what had been achieved as "scarcely to be parallell'd in history".¹ To his friend Orme at Madras he wrote: "I am possessed of volumes of materials for the continuance of your history, in which will appear fighting, tricks, chicanery, intrigues, politics and the Lord knows what; in short there will be a fine field for you to display your genius in; I shall certainly call upon the Coast in my way to England. I have many particulars to explain to you relating to the said history which must be published."

His work in India, Clive felt, was now done. He had re-established the English, under the wing of their own Nawab. He had made enough money himself. Why then remain 'in this unhealthy climate'? He proposed to leave India in January. His wife, who had just come from the South to join him, he proposed to send home in a few weeks with part of his money. The rest would be despatched with the kindly assistance of the Dutch Governor at Chinsurah, as bills of exchange were not easily negotiable through other channels.

His wealth immediately began to make a difference to his mode of life. Orme was asked to buy "the finest and best you get for love or money—200 shirts, the wrist bands worked, some of the ruffles worked with a border, others in squares, and the rest plain; socks, neckcloths, handkerchiefs in proportion, three large of the finest stockings, several pieces spotted muslin and plain two yards wide for aprons, book muslin cambricks or a few pieces of the finest dimity and a compleat set of table linen of Fort St. David diaper made for the

¹In a letter to his father.

purpose. You will have five months for these matters, and though there may not be time to get a compleat set of chintz furniture for a room, bed, chairs, etc. it may follow."

If Clive was indulgent to himself he was also abundantly generous to his relatives and friends. As soon as he received the money from Mir Jaffar he distributed large sums to "those immediately about me and one or two of the principal officers". On each of his five sisters he settled £2,000. "I would advise the lasses to marry as soon as possible," he said, "for they have no time to lose." Four of them were married, even well married, within a few months of each other. He promised "to take care of my brothers in good time". The annuity he allowed his parents was doubled. In addition he maintained a coach for them at a cost of £300 a year. Adequate incomes were settled on his aunts. The uncle resident at Styche was asked to engage in the renovation of the old home. A cousin in India, George Clive, was given £15,000 and a similar sum was settled on his brother-in-law, Edmund Maskelyne. "There is an uncle of Mrs. Clive's, Mr. James Maskelyne, in great distress," he wrote to his father, "please to apply to my attorneys for £50 to give him on my account"; which, at the value of money two hundred years ago, was not the inconsiderable sum it may seem. Even his old friend Stringer Lawrence, now aged and very infirm, was remembered. Clive set aside enough money to provide him with an income of £500 a year, which, with difficulty, Lawrence was at last persuaded to accept.

5

Clive stayed a month in Murshidabad with the new Nawab and then returned to Calcutta. Admiral Watson's old hostility having been transformed now to an ardent admiration, Clive was greeted on arrival with a warm note, promising a call "to pay my respects the moment my letters are finished for the Coast, and indeed I promised myself that pleasure this evening but found myself not quite well".

This was no polite excuse; for the illness of which Watson complained was to cause his death in less than a week. Surgeon Ives found the disease difficult to diagnose. The Admiral was young, still in his early forties, and full of vigour; but bile had confined him to his bed. All manner of remedies were tried, yet he sank slowly. A few hours before the end, Watson, inquiring about the news from home by the mail just in, was told that Admiral Byng, whom he knew well,

had been shot for hesitating to engage in battle at Minorca. The odds had been against Byng, as they had been against Clive at Plassey. Both hesitated. But whereas Clive took the risk and won, Byng retired and was shot as a coward. "He reflected and reasoned much," writes Ives of Watson's last moments, "on the uncertain basis on which an officer's character stands, and concluded with observing how much more hazardous it was for him to err on the cautious than the desperate side."

Watson was honoured with a spectacular funeral. Clive followed the coffin to the grave with Admiral Pocock, now Commander-in-Chief of the Eastern Fleet. Every officer and seaman of the squadron, as many gentlemen from the army as could be spared, most of the French prisoners of war, and thousands of Armenians and Indians formed the cortège. "Unhappy fate!" observed Clive in a letter home, "after having escaped all the risk of war, to be thus untimely cut off in the midst of his successes, crowned with glory and reputation." And when it is remembered that Watson gallantly surrendered his leave of absence and harnessed an impaired health to the avenging of the Black Hole of Calcutta, his fate seems all the unhappier.

Another to sacrifice his life by giving up his leave of absence was Clive's second in command, Major Kilpatrick, his companion in many of his earliest campaigns. Kilpatrick died two months after Watson, with but five of the two hundred and forty who accompanied him from Madras to Fulta left to survive him.

CHAPTER XXVI

Departure Deferred

I

THERE had been nothing but disaster for England since the outbreak of the Seven Years War. People crumpled up their news-sheets and flung them aside in disgust. Trenchant writers attacked the Ministry, the generals, the admirals—and demanded their blood. Byng had already been sacrificed by way of encouragement and as an earnest of the Government's resolve to win. To pacify the populace the concerted effort made by Clive and Watson against the pirates at Gheriah was magnified into a great British victory. Then came the news of the fall of Calcutta and the Black Hole, which was followed in Europe, in Canada, and elsewhere, by serious reverses.

"Minorca is gone; Oswego gone; the nation is in a ferment," wrote Horace Walpole; and then, upon the success of our ally, Frederick the Great, "The King of Prussia has sent us a victory, which is very kind, as we are not likely to get any of our own." A few months later we were still without successes and Walpole declared: "We had a torrent of bad news yesterday from America. Lord Loudon has found an army of 21,000 French, gives over the design on Louisberg, and retires to Halifax. Admiral Holbourn writes that they have nineteen ships to his seventeen, and he cannot attack them. It is time for England to slip her own cables, and float away into some unknown ocean."

Had we no one to lead us to victory?

While this question was on every lip, the coffee-houses and clubs of London were suddenly stirred by news of great consequence. Fops raised their eye-glasses delicately to express their interest and tapped their handsome snuff-boxes with satisfaction. Had they not heard of this young soldier before? Yes, at Arcot. Somewhere in Southern India. They recalled the acclamation on his homecoming. And now, while our tried leaders were displaying timidity and acquiring nothing but reverses, this Clive, still young, had won the most remarkable victory of the war. Plassey! A large Indian army, with its elephants, its nabobs and its camels, had been routed by a mere handful of white

men. It was staggering. A king displaced. The destiny of three vast provinces recast. Huzzas were uttered for Clive. Men waved their lace handkerchiefs with a delicate grace. Yes, Clive. He had re-established the glory of Britain in the eyes of the world! He was compared with Cortes and Pizarro. William Pitt, most popular and most powerful of parliamentarians, newly made Secretary for War, paid the young Englishman an eloquent tribute. Grateful for the victory, Pitt was proud to indicate it with an appropriate gesture. "We have lost," he said, "our glory, honour, and reputation everywhere but in India. There the country has a Heaven-born general who has never learnt the art of war, nor is his name enrolled among the great officers who have for many years received their country's pay. Yet he was not afraid to attack a numerous army with a handful of men."

Pitt himself had a notable link with India. An adventurous grandfather, Thomas Pitt, defiant of the monopoly of the East India Company, which had been assured by a long line of English kings and queens, sailed for the East as an interloper, trading privately and evading the vigilance of the monopolists. He succeeded and reaped abundant profits. He brought back the famous Pitt diamond, which he disposed of later to the Duc d'Orleans, Regent of France, for over £100,000. Twice he was arrested by the East India Company and flung into prison, but with laudable persistence he returned to his illegitimate enterprise the moment he regained his freedom. In the end, unable to curb him, the Company bought him over. They appointed him Governor of Madras and converted him into their most helpful ally. He fought thereafter with the utmost vigour for the Company against other interlopers—men whom the Company would not employ, men the Company had dismissed, men who had left the service for the greater individual profits that could be made outside.

2

Clive strove to be in England for these plaudits, but the man he had set up as Nawab proved neither easy to establish nor easy to control. Mir Jaffar had been both brave and popular in his youth, but now he was old, irresolute and sensuous. He was scarcely less hesitant than the spineless nephew he had displaced. He was full of intrigue and evasion. He looked far more than he leaped. Swelling with pride at his new dignity, Jaffar was apt to grow a little sullen and resentful at the thought

that he owed it all to the English and to the complaisant co-operation of the Hindus; he was himself a Moslem. To Roy Dullub, Diwan of Suraj-ud-Dowlah, had been extended a continuance in the dual office of Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, in return for his aid in the conspiracy. To the Hindu banker Seit, Jaffar was deeply indebted for money. As for the English, was he not bound hand and foot to them until the completion of these iniquitous payments?

Jaffar's subtle brain sought an unobtrusive way out of this plight. As he reflected, his lean brown fingers stroked the grey of his short beard and his brow was crossed by a troubled frown. There was no apparent way out. There were no French to whom he could turn—Clive had seen to that. The only other European power was the Dutch, who had a factory at Chinsurah and one or two small scattered agencies. Their forces were negligible, but they were the only alternative he saw. So he approached them.

Slowly Jaffar's manner changed. Towards Scrafton, now British Resident at Court, he became sullen, even discourteous.

His first need, Jaffar realized, was money. Without it he would never attain any measure of freedom or independence. He thrust out extortionate hands to repair the havoc in his exchequer. The Hindu bankers were seized with instant panic. But they were determined to defend their hoarded gold. There were whispers of fresh intrigues. It was said that Roy Dullub, who was both a Hindu and rich, had embarked upon a new conspiracy with Clive to replace Mir Jaffar by Suraj-ud-Dowlah's younger brother. Clive denounced the rumour as groundless and described the boy as 'almost an idiot'. But Jaffar thought it safer to remove his imbecile nephew. The boy was seized and his head struck off. At this the Prime Minister, Roy Dullub, knowing that his name had been mentioned in these whispers, fled. He went among the other malcontents and stirred them up against the Nawab.

Jaffar found himself beset by troubles. Powerful subjects like the Rajahs of Midnapore and Purnea were up in arms against him. Ram Narrain, Governor of Patna, chief city in his vast province of Bihar, gave cause for anxiety. The Nawab of Oudh was hurriedly assembling an army to hurl across the frontier. Jaffar was in a dilemma. His calculations had not envisaged such developments. He saw himself slipping slowly off the throne and, to his great humiliation, he was forced to appeal again to the man who had elevated him.

He appealed to Clive. He implored Clive to come with his entire

army. The resentful ruler suddenly became the suppliant. Only a few weeks before he had stooped to intrigue with the Dutch, for a foreign ally seemed better than a foreign master; but now, on his bended knees, he was appealing again to that master, offering a lakh of rupees a month (£400 a day) if Clive would but come with his army.

3

Clive answered the call. He set out with his army, but he did not use it. He was able to secure, as he phrased it, "all the advantages that could be expected or wished both to the Nabob and the Company without bloodshed". This was attained by the exercise of a latent genius in still another sphere—statesmanship. Clive's administrative ability was remarkable. It equalled his military skill and, at its fullness, excelled it. His policy is revealed in a letter he wrote about this time to Warren Hastings, who was at the Court at Murshidabad with Scrafton: "You are not acquainted with the connection between Roydulap and the English; I think that they are bound not only to protect him, but his family also. You may remonstrate with decency as often as opportunity offers, that it is unjust to keep mother and daughter from the father. As for the brothers it is not worth interfering about them. In short I would have you act upon all occasions so as to avoid coming to hextremities and at the same time shew as much spirit and resolution as will convince the durbar¹ that we always have it in our power to make ourselves respected. You must be a little severe in exacting the remainder of the last sixth;² it is in the nature of these people to do nothing through inclinations. A few seapoys or chokeys now and then will greatly expedite the payment money."

Clive was able to placate the rebels by winning their confidence and their friendship. Roy Dullub was reinstated as Prime Minister. The Governor of Patna, Jaffar had resolved to replace by his son-in-law, Mir Cossim ("a greater fool than Meer Jaffier," writes Clive), but Clive successfully discouraged this.

Sensing Jaffar's intentions with regard to further payments to the English, Clive resolved to take it from his power to delay or interrupt them. He insisted, while still Jaffar was eager for our aid, that the revenues of Burdwan and other districts near Calcutta should be

¹Government.

²The whole of the first instalment had not yet been paid.

assigned to the English until the outstanding instalments had been paid. Jaffar issued the requisite orders, and Clive appointed Nuncomar, an associate in intrigue with Omichand on the occasion of our attack on Chandernagore, to collect these revenues in order (Clive explained) "to avoid giving the Nabob and the great men about him umbrage in seeing such large sums coming to the treasury and then set out again for the use of the English".

Clive also extracted from Mir Jaffar a new privilege for his employers. The East India Company was granted a monopoly in the saltpetre trade, which was to prove abundantly lucrative and to provoke the Dutch into lending a readier ear to Mir Jaffar's next appeal.

For himself Clive took nothing. But that turbaned anachronism, the Moghul Emperor, in confirming the *fait accompli* of Mir Jaffar's assumption of the Nawabate, bestowed upon Clive, as his instrument, a peerage of the Indian Empire and a generalship, grandiloquently styled 'Commander of Six Thousand Horse'—honours which Clive had himself secretly sought through influential agents, just as he was already seeking similar favours from his own country in recognition of his success at Plassey.

4

From the Company, instead of gratitude, Clive received a rebuff, which was possibly unintended.

The spiritless Drake had, pending the decision of the directors, been carrying on as Governor ever since the recapture of Calcutta, though Clive was, of course, independent of his control. Eighteen months later, in June, 1758, the directors' decision arrived. Drake was removed and a new Council was appointed with Clive at its head. But by the same ship there arrived a further despatch of later date, appointing four Governors of Calcutta, to hold office in rotation through the year. Clive's name was not among them. There wasn't even the explanation that the directors believed that by now Clive would be back in Madras.

The four who had been appointed rotatory Governors summoned the new Council, and wrote to Clive offering him the undisputed governorship. "Your eminent services, abilities and merit, together with your superior weight and influence with the present Soubah¹ and his officers, are motives which have great force with us on this

¹Nawab.

occasion, and all concur in pointing out you as the person best able to render our honourable employers the necessary service at this juncture till they shall make their further pleasure known by the appointment of a President for their affairs here. . . . We flatter ourselves you will be induced to accept of our offer from your wonted regard to the interest of our honourable employers, and zeal for the welfare of their affairs, which we doubt not you are, as well as ourselves, convinced will be much prejudiced by a rotation in the executive part of Government."

Clive was annoyed at the slight. It was more than a year since his triumph at Plassey, but actually at the time the despatch left England, the directors had not yet heard of that battle.

"Though I think I have cause to be dissatisfied with the Court of Directors," replied Clive, "for laying me aside in their new form of government without any reason assigned, after having named me as head of the general committee in the letter of the 3rd August last, yet animated by the noble example of public spirit which you have set me, I have determined to waive all private considerations, where the general good is concerned; and as there is no doubt, that the government of a single person, involved as we now are with the country powers, must have infinite advantages over that complicated form of government established from home, I shall from that motive, though both my health and private concerns strongly require my returning to Europe, accept the offer you have done me the honour to make me, till such time as our employers have employed a President in the usual form."

Clive resigned himself now to remaining at least a further year in India. The plan to send his wife home with chests of gold and diamonds was abandoned. She insisted on staying with him and he needed her to minister to his bodily sufferings, for his nervous complaint, though it did not impair his hardihood in the field, never left him wholly free from pain; and to solace him in his moods of returning moroseness. Tireless, fearless, unyielding in battle, Clive surrendered himself in the silences of the large white house they occupied opposite the fort to brooding over the slight of the directors. To his friend Pigot at Madras he confessed that he accepted the offer of his colleagues "much against my own inclination I assure you, for notwithstanding a few flourishing paragraphs in the Company's general letters, I have no reason to be satisfied with the treatment of the directors, in appointing me the first of the committee for transacting their affairs in Bengal in

the letter of August, and afterwards making another nomination without the least apology or reasons given for so doing. You will observe, they greatly disapprove the independent powers given me by you gentlemen, tho all their successes in Bengal be owing to that act of authority".

Apart from the commendable self-sacrifice that made them set aside "the dignity of Government, and all the advantages thereunto annexed", as Clive termed it, what actually influenced the rotatory Governors was the knowledge that Mir Jaffar had begun to betray a sullen hostility towards us and that there had arrived in the South a formidable French army and fleet under Lally, which had already captured Fort St. David, destroyed all its fortifications, and had the same afternoon taken Dovicotah. It was obvious that their next endeavour would be to recover their lost prestige and possessions in Bengal.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Jaghir

I

LALLY, like Law, was of what was later regarded as British origin. The son of Sir Gerald O'Lally, an Irish Jacobite, he acquired from his French mother a resplendent ancestry, and became Count de Lally and Baron de Tollendal. He fought at Dettingen against King George the Second of England. He invaded Scotland with the young Pretender and fought at Falkirk. Honours were showered upon him by France. He was granted extensive commands, for he was the favourite of fortune and of Madame de Pompadour.

He was despatched to India at the outbreak of the Seven Years War, but the journey had taken nearly two years. Encouraged by his recent successes at Fort St. David and Dovicotah and exercising that high-handedness that earned him the hatred of the men he led, Lally removed Bussy from the Court of the Nizam, thus discarding the only asset France still possessed in India. He appointed in Bussy's place one whom he regarded as an abler statesman and a better soldier, the Marquis de Conflans, who was new to the East, ignorant of caste prejudice, intrigue, and the vagaries of oriental warfare.

It was Lally's resolve eventually to invade Bengal. "It is the whole of British India," he wrote ambitiously to Bussy, "which it now remains for us to attack. I do not conceal from you that, having taken Madras, it is my resolution to repair immediately, by land or by sea, to the banks of the Ganges, where your talents and experience will be of the greatest importance to me."

Pigot appealed again to Clive to return. But the position was different now. Clive no longer regarded himself as Governor of Fort St. David and second on the Council of Madras. He was administrative head (though locally chosen) of a settlement that was in effective control of three vast provinces. He regarded the preserve as his, because it was by his valour and subterfuge that it had been secured. Besides, he was supreme here; to return to Madras would be to surrender pride of place and revert to subordinated authority both in the civil and military spheres, although Colonel Lawrence was old

now and 'incapable of bearing much fatigue'. But what weighed most with Clive in his decision to remain in Bengal was his consciousness of its superiority to Madras in wealth, in trading possibilities, in everything. And he realized, for his spies kept him well-informed of Mir Jaffar's actions, that the moment his back was turned Jaffar would be conspiring much more overtly, much more vigorously, much more effectively for the overthrow of the English.

Still, Lally was a material danger in the South, and, if he was not checked there, he would assuredly descend in triumph upon Bengal. Clive was alive to the danger. He wrote long letters of advice to Pigot. "I do not think victory depends so much on equality of numbers as conduct and resolution. . . . If it should be thought, that we are not strong enough for an offensive war, other measures I think may be persued, which will greatly distress, if not in the end ruin our enemies. Their great want of money is well known, and every method which can be thought of to increase their want of it, must greatly conduce to overset all their offensive schemes; cant a body of Moratta or other horse be taken into pay to burn, ravage, and destroy the whole country, in such manner as that no revenue can be drawn from thence. Bengal is in itself an inexhaustible fund of riches, and you may depend upon being supplied with money and provisions in abundance; in the meantime what must become of the French, if they cannot raise money sufficient to pay their forces;—they must disband their Blacks, and the Whites will disband themselves."

Clive did not confine himself to giving advice. He saw an effective means of assisting Madras without either returning or sending any troops there. As soon as Bussy left the Nizam, the vast French territory under his control seized its opportunity for revolt. One chief, Ananda Raz, made a dash for Vizagapatam, hoisted the English flag, and appealed to Madras for aid. But Madras could not spare any men. Clive, however, against the unanimous opinion of his Council, decided to support him. Kilpatrick being dead and Coote away on sick leave, Clive had Colonel Forde transferred from Aldercron's regiment to Calcutta, and now entrusted to him the task of leading a detachment into the Northern Circars, which lay midway between our possessions in Madras and Bengal. Here Forde would be able, by harassing the enemy, to relieve the pressure on Madras; and yet he would be near enough to dash back to the assistance of Calcutta when needed.

It was a master stroke of strategy. Without this diversion the position in Southern India would have been far more serious for us. Lally

followed up his capture of Fort St. David and Dovicotah by seizing Arcot and proclaiming Chunda's son, Rajah Sahib, Nawab of the Carnatic. He then directed his attention on Madras. The Black Town was captured. The guns wrought havoc on the European houses. In a few weeks the place lay in ruins, but tenaciously the English refused to surrender. They were in no mood to suffer again the humiliation of a few years before when French troops had swaggered through their streets as victors. Yet the eventual raising of the siege was due largely to the victories Forde was winning in the Northern Circars.

Clive's foresight saved Madras. It did more. Forde's successes proved so dazzling that the Nizam, Salabat Jung, while hurrying to assist the French in the Circars, felt it would be more profitable to transfer his pledges to the English. He saw the might of France dwindling. It seemed to him futile to lean any longer on the French for security against the ambitions of a treacherous brother. So he hastily made a treaty with Forde and transferred the whole of the Northern Circars to the English. He also undertook to expel the French from all his territories. It was the completion of the work Clive had begun at Arcot. His triumph then had made the protégé of England the Nawab of the Carnatic. Now the Nizam of the Deccan himself was the ally of the English.

2

Clive's eagerness to return home was strong, but the prospect receded from month to month and from year to year. He was anxious to enjoy the fruits of Plassey, but his desire to leave nothing undone still held him at his post.

"If ambition satisfied in its greatest extent, and the gratification of every wish now center'd in my native country, be not motives sufficient to induce me to return there, I know not what are," he wrote,¹ "yet, Sir, a thorough conviction of what I owe to my country and the Company has prevailed upon me to continue one year longer in India, with no other view in nature than that of seeing the Company's affairs in Bengal, important as they now are, put upon such a footing, as nothing but the want of timely exertion from home can destroy."

His decision was further influenced by his confirmation in office as Governor of Calcutta by the directors at home. But he was resolved not to remain more than a year longer, for with every delay he saw

¹To Lawrence Sullivan at the East Indian House in London.

his ambitions balked. Already, he had heard from friends, Eyre Coote had been arraying himself in England in some of the glory that was Clive's. It had been said that while Clive hesitated, Coote had urged him on towards Plassey. Coote was fêted and toasted. Clive began to fear that his own glory would be dimmed by a delayed homecoming.

But the numerous letters he had written to men of influence, stressing the value of what he had achieved, were kept alive by the over-zealous interest of a proud father, who, Clive felt, was "exerting himself too much and paying too many visits to the Duke of Newcastle, Mr. Fox and other great men". He had also heard of the parental pestering of Pitt with whispers that 'General' Clive could find him enough money in India to pay off the entire National Debt.

The elder Clive was becoming in fact a laughing-stock and a nuisance. His exertions, however, were not solely for his son. He had personal ambitions. He aspired himself to enter society and to stand for Parliament. The filial purse being deep, Richard Clive was able in time to succeed. He strode into St. Stephen's in boots and gaiters as the Member for Montgomery. But Clive, though pleased with his father's success, begged his friends to restrain the paternal ardour in so far as it affected his affairs, "for altho'," he wrote, "I intend getting into Parliament and have hopes of being taken some notice of by his Majesty yet you know the merit of all actions are greatly lessened by being too much boasted of. I know my father's disposition leads this way, which proceeds from his affection for me".

Still Clive himself never neglected an opportunity of pursuing every advantage. When Lawrence Sullivan, whom Clive had met in Bombay, became a candidate for the chairmanship of the East India Company, Clive bought up stock, exercised his influence, and spared no effort to get Sullivan elected. He took care to inform Sullivan of this, declaring that he offered his "interest and that of my friends, because I am persuaded your utmost endeavours will be exerted for the benefit of your employers". In a long letter he described to Sullivan the conditions in Bengal. He indicated how, if it was desired, the three vast provinces over which Mir Jaffar ruled could be conquered and held by a force of no more than two thousand white men. "After the battle of Plassey, I could have appropriated the whole country to the Company and preserved it afterwards with as much ease as Meer Jaffier the present Soubah now does, through the terror of the English arms and their influence." The Moghul Emperor at Delhi had hinted to Clive that he would much rather the English ruled, for he could then

be sure of the subsidy of half a million sterling a year which Bengal was expected to pay but rarely did. Clive also revealed his lurking distrust of Jaffar. "You, Sir, who have resided so long in India," he told Sullivan, "are well acquainted with the nature and dispositions of these Mussulmen. Gratitude they have none, bare men of very narrow conceptions, and have adopted a system of politicks more peculiar in this country than any other, viz., to attempt everything by treachery rather than force. Under these circumstances may not so weak a Prince as Meer Jaffier be easily destroyed, or influenced by others to attempt destroying us. What is it then can enable us to secure our present acquisitions or improve upon them, but such a force as leaves nothing to the power of treachery and ingratitude."

So fired was Clive with the idea of conquest and empire that, not content with outlining the possibilities to Sullivan, he revealed his vision in its fullness to Pitt, the most talented and the most influential member of His Majesty's Government. He urged Pitt, now that our Indian acquisitions had become too big for a trading corporation to rule, to assume control of them in the name of the Government. "There will be," Clive wrote, "little or no difficulty in obtaining the absolute possession of these rich kingdoms; and that with the Moghul's own consent, on condition of paying him less than a fifth of the revenues thereof. Now I leave you to judge whether an income yearly of upwards of two millions sterling, with the provision of three provinces abounding in the most valuable productions of nature and art, be an object deserving of public attention; and whether it be worth the nation's while to take the proper measures to secure such an acquisition—an acquisition which, under the management of so able and disinterested a minister, would prove a source of immense wealth to the kingdom, and might in time be appropriated in part as a fund towards diminishing the heavy load of debt under which we at present labour. Add to these advantages the influence we shall thereby acquire over the several European nations engaged in commerce here, which these could no longer carry on but through our indulgence, and under such limitations as we should think fit to prescribe. It is well worthy consideration that this project may be brought about without draining the mother country as has been too much the case with our possessions in America. A small force from home will be sufficient, as we always make sure of any number we please of black troops, who, being both much better paid and treated by us than by the country powers, will very readily enter our service.

The natives themselves," he added, "have no attachment whatever to particular princes; and as, under the present Government, they have no security for their lives or properties, they would rejoice in so happy an exchange as that of a mild for a despotic government."

Pitt regarded the proposition as sound but not yet practicable. His chief difficulty was the Company's charter which would not expire for a further twenty years; another of his difficulties was the ruling of the courts when the right of the Company to their acquisitions was recently challenged. The Crown, it was held, had no legal claim to these lands. Yet, exactly as Clive had foreseen and advised, so a hundred years later, after the massacre of the Mutiny, the Government stepped in to take over absolute control from the Company.

3

Realizing that with the return of calm Mir Jaffar would renew his activities for undermining English prestige, Clive directed his attention to the strengthening of our position. The old fort in Calcutta he had already decided to abandon. On a new site of his selection a vast, defiant structure had begun to rise. Orders were now issued for the work to be advanced with expedition. More companies of Bengali sepoys were recruited. Clive also reorganized the small European force in Calcutta. He eliminated from it all distinctions of province and evolved a unified battalion. There were grave complaints from officers who considered their seniority affected by the shuffle; but Clive, declaring that they "had grown sufficiently rich in the service to be desirous of any pretence for quitting it", said he would welcome their resignations. He refused to be diverted from his purpose.

Mir Jaffar, meanwhile, was in active intrigue with the Dutch. He invited them to bring troops and ships into Bengal and promised them his support. Despatches were hurried to Batavia. Clive regarded it as a race against time. If the Dutch troops arrived while Bengal remained inadequately protected, with the bulk of our forces in the Northern Circars, anything might happen to our future in the country. The French menace in the South had not yet been destroyed. Salabat Jung had not yet been won over. The moves seemed uncertain, fraught with peril, when once again a considerate fate flung Mir Jaffar on his knees before Clive, a suppliant for aid against danger.

The heir to the Moghul throne in Delhi, weary of his father's

helplessness and resentful of the restraint exercised by ministers, determined upon an independent bid for power. With a band of adventurers he descended on Bengal, the proudest province of Hindustan, rich in its prizes. Shuja-ud-Dowlah,¹ Nawab of adjacent Oudh, who had given sanctuary to Law and his band of refugee French, offered his eager support, and urged his neighbour and relative, Mahommed Kuli, Viceroy of Allahabad, to join the expedition, hopeful that Kuli, if compensated in Bengal, might yield to Shuja's designs on Allahabad. The three armies bore down upon Patna.

Mir Jaffar turned instantly to Clive. Again to his humiliation and his anger, he found himself forced to lean upon the man who had raised him to the throne. He sent for Warren Hastings and "desired me very earnestly . . . to represent to you the necessity of taking the field immediately, as delays at this time might be of the utmost ill consequence, the King's son being already so near Patna". At the same time, the Emperor's heir also wrote to Clive, asking for aid; and the Emperor himself, at the instigation of his Vizier, wrote claiming Clive's allegiance and assistance against a turbulent son, because of Clive's honorary rank in the imperial army.

Not for an instant did Clive waver in his loyalty to Mir Jaffar. With all the Nawab's faults he was the symbol of British power, the sublimation of British force. His authority would have to be maintained. Clive promised Jaffar his immediate and full support, though he had no more than 450 Europeans to offer. Learning this, Jaffar strove to buy off the Crown Prince; but Clive, with admirable foresight, restrained him. "I have just heard," he wrote to Jaffar, "a piece of intelligence, which I can scarce give credit to; it is, that your Excellency is going to offer a sum of money to the King's son. If you do this, you will have Sujah-u-Dowlah, the Mahrattas, and many more, come from all parts to the confines of your country, who will bully you out of money, till you have none left in your treasury. If your Excellency should pursue this method, it will be furnishing the King's son with the means to raise forces, which, indeed may endanger the loss of your country. What will be said, if the great Jaffier Ali Khan, Subah of this province, who commands an army of sixty thousand men, should offer money to a boy who had scarce a soldier with him? I beg your Excellency will rely on the fidelity of the English and of those troops which are attached to you."

Clive had absolute confidence in himself and his small band. His

¹Not to be confused with Suraj-ud-Dowlah.

only fear was the treachery of the Nawab's own supporters. Hurrying to Murshidabad he reproved Jaffar severely for his recent foolish manoeuvres and "the danger of such like behaviour". Ram Narrain, Nawab of Patna, seemed to be wavering. The invading armies were already near his city. Would he be loyal to his superior Nawab Jaffar, or would he accept the alluring offers of the invaders? Clive wrote to him, advised him, warned him. "What power has the Shah Zada¹ to resist the united forces of the Nabob and the English? Think, then, what will be your fate." In a race against time, Clive and Mir Jaffar set out for Patna. To proclaim their accord they rode on the same elephant.

The Nawab of Patna listened attentively to the tempters. He even called upon the Crown Prince. But, at the last moment, he felt it would be more prudent and profitable to range himself with his Nawab and with Clive. Thereupon his city was besieged by the invaders. Clive hastened to the rescue. But before Clive could arrive, the siege was suddenly abandoned and, to the surprise of all, the armies departed. To Mahommed Kuli, ruler of Allahabad, who was an ally of the Crown Prince, breathless messengers had whispered that Allahabad had been seized and added to the Oudh possessions. Kuli instantly drew off his army from the walls of Patna and turned its face homewards, despite the urgent entreaties of the Crown Prince, who was constrained, for lack of support, to do likewise.

A day or two later Clive entered Patna at the head of the English and Murshidabad armies. The danger had passed. For the second time Clive had come to Jaffar's rescue; for the second time, without firing a shot, Clive had achieved what he sought. Mir Jaffar was grateful. The Emperor was grateful. The imperial Vizier hailed Clive as "mighty Colonel", "high and mighty, the powerful protector", and invited him to establish an English factory in Delhi. The Emperor's son, meanwhile, sent Clive pitiful letters, describing his destitution, declaring that persecution by the Vizier had left him "not a spot to rest on". Clive sent him £5,000 out of his own purse. The reward for this generous impulse was reaped by his employers and his country six years later.

4

Clive sought for himself a reward that he had expected after Plassey and had subtly striven to secure during the two intervening years. A

¹The Emperor's son.

reward such as had been conferred on Dupleix and on Cortes: a grant of land, yielding a set annual income. It was customary to receive this *jaghir*, as it was called in India, in support of the peerage that Clive had already extracted from the Emperor. But Jaffar had been dilatory, even reluctant.

Already Clive had written to the Seits, the bankers: "I always understood, that when you had procured me the sunnod for a 6,000 munsub and 5,000 horse, with the title of Zubit al Mulk Nazier ad Doula, that the Nabob would have favoured me with a jaguire, equal to the rank I received by my sunnod; but to this day I have not heard a word from him concerning it. As this is an affair of my own, I have not chose to address the Nabob theron now. As there is a strong friendship subsisting between you and me, I beg leave to give you the trouble to apply to the Nabob concerning this affair, and that I may have a jaguire equal to my rank."

The Seits manipulated all the influential strings on his behalf, but beyond offering Clive an estate in a precarious border province, the revenue of which could never be relied on, Jaffar did nothing. It was not until after the withdrawal of the Crown Prince that Warren Hastings was able to inform Clive that the Nawab "expresses the most grateful sense of the services which you have performed for him, and declared to me his resolution to use every means in his power to procure an order from the court for your jaghire, being ashamed that you should do so much for him without the prospect of reaping any advantage to yourself by it".

So when Clive passed through Murshidabad on his way back to Calcutta, the Nawab detained him to present him with the coveted *jaghir*. He conferred on him the right to collect for his own use the rent of some land newly leased to the East India Company. The land lay to the south of Calcutta. No securer revenue could have been found in all the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa; for with his employers as his tenants, Clive could, in view of all he had secured for them, rely on receiving the £30,000 that the *jaghir* was expected to yield annually. He made no secret of it; he could make no secret of it in the circumstances. Yet this grant was to provoke the greatest agitation, to draw the sternest criticism and to provide the acutest distress in the years ahead.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Dutch Emergency

I

CLIVE returned to Calcutta in August, 1759, his heart filled with satisfaction and with gratitude towards Jaffar. He had not long, however, to wait before the months of ceaseless intrigue in which Jaffar had indulged with the Dutch bore fruit. News was brought him that at the mouth of the River Hughli there had arrived a Dutch ship with a large army of Malayan soldiers.

It was not as easy to deal with the Dutch as with the French. After centuries of sustained conflict the English and the French no longer deemed it necessary to inquire whether officially they were at war or peace. But with the Dutch we were linked by bonds of the closest friendship and alliance. In the present war in Europe the soldiers of the two countries were fighting shoulder to shoulder for the same cause. To attack the Dutch in India would be an act of such gravity that even the boldest would have shrunk from it. Clive knew it would prove an embarrassment to the Government at home. He knew it would merit, and doubtless receive, disciplinary correction from the directors of the East India Company. To Clive personally, since he had the bulk of his fortune in transit through Dutch channels, it also meant, in success or in failure, the loss of almost all he possessed. Yet it was obvious that, with an accession of strength, the Dutch would destroy all that had been won in India by Britain. To permit the Dutch ship to come up the river unchallenged would, Clive knew, be to invite the doom of empire.

Clive was neither cowed into inactivity nor did he leap into impetuous folly. He sent an immediate protest to Mir Jaffar and took effective steps to prevent either the landing of Dutch troops or the further passage of the ship up the river. He smiled ironically when he recalled how he had to wear down the hostility of the Dutch towards Mir Jaffar upon his accession, the many letters he wrote for this purpose to his friend Bisdorn, the Dutch Governor, and the talks with him over dinner and a game of cards.

Jaffar replied to Clive's protest by rebuking the Dutch, who

pretended that their ship, bound for Negapatam, had been driven into the Hughli by the weather. They made at the same time a furtive endeavour to send eighteen Malayan soldiers to their settlement at Chinsurah. But the English were too alert. The attempt was discovered and frustrated, and the ship, finding it impossible to evade our vigilance, crept away in despair.

But two months later seven large Dutch ships sailed boldly up the Hughli, with over fifteen hundred Dutch soldiers. Mir Jaffar happened to be in Calcutta at the time. He had come on a ceremonial visit to Clive, attended by glittering pageantry. The rejoicings were interrupted by this new threat launched upon the city by Jaffar's treachery. As he had been false to his old master Suraj-ud-Dowlah, so was Jaffar false now to the new.

With an airy wave of the hand he dismissed the affair. He promised to reprove the Dutch again most sternly. He set out instantly for the town of Hughli, which was within a mile or two of the Dutch settlement of Chinsurah. But Clive learned that instead of reproving them, Jaffar received the Dutch representatives "in a most gracious manner, more like friends and allies than enemies to him and his country". Clive also learned that permission had been granted for the Dutch ships to come up the Hughli; and that Dutch agents were busy all over the province, pressing recruits into Dutch service.

The time had arrived, Clive saw, for action. The force at his disposal in Calcutta was small, but he called out the militia and raised a band of volunteer horsemen. Holwell, just returned from England, again led the militiamen as he had done at the sack of Calcutta. Colonel Forde, dismissed by the directors of the Company despite his victories in the Northern Circars, was returning home dejected, disillusioned and ill, but lay detained near Masulipatam by the weather. Appealed to by Clive in this emergency, Forde gallantly returned to Calcutta to serve against the Dutch.

We had only four small ships on the Hughli. One of these Clive despatched post-haste to Admiral Cornish on the Arakan coast, appealing for help. The other three he placed in readiness for the defence of Calcutta. Cornish never received the appeal. The ship bearing it was captured, and the message intercepted.

The Dutch, realizing that delay would redound to the advantage of the English, decided on immediate action. They sent a strong note to Calcutta, outlining their grievances and threatening reprisals. Grievances there unquestionably were, for the privileges the English

had secured from Mir Jaffar reacted to the disadvantage of others. The English exercised, for instance, the right to search all vessels proceeding up the Hughli. They also insisted on supplying all pilots.

"Our settlement was established here long before the English and other nations entered this kingdom," wrote the Dutch. But that did not concern Clive. He refused to surrender anything, and the Dutch leapt to the attack. They pounced upon seven small English vessels lying near the mouth of the river and tore down their colours. Troops were landed. They set fire to some riverside houses and stores. Then the Dutch ships sailed up stream for Calcutta, but, not having pilots, they were unable to proceed far. Clive realized that in the circumstances they would be constrained to land all their troops, so he flung a detachment under Forde's command between Chinsurah and Calcutta to prevent the Dutch settlement from aiding the invaders.

Clive now decided to take the offensive by both land and water. Reinforcing Forde, he sent orders to Captain Wilson, of the *Calcutta*, chief of our three ships, to fight and destroy the Dutch. Friends strove to indicate the risk he was running, but Clive brushed aside their timidity. "A public man," he declared, "may occasionally be called upon to act with a halter round his neck."

2

The November sun had set and night had come upon Calcutta with a singing swarm of mosquitos that made the air flicker. At intervals each of four men seated at a game of whist waved his arm before his face to drive off the insects. Clive slapped his hands together, and opening them gazed at the palms. Often the mosquitoes eluded him; at times he wiped on his handkerchief the blood of his victims.

It had been an anxious day. That morning, at Clive's instruction, the Dutch ships had been challenged on the Hughli. A full apology for the insult to the British flag had been demanded and refused, so our three small vessels confronted the seven stout Dutch men-of-war.

Though unequal in size and armament the English put up a fierce fight. Our fire proved so intense that two of the Dutch ships turned and fled while a third was driven ashore. This left four Dutch vessels to our three. The English continued the attack with vigour and success until the invaders crept out of our range of fire and sped swiftly down

the Hughli. We were too crippled to follow, yet all the Dutchmen did not succeed in getting away. Two English ships coming to our rescue encountered one of the Dutch vessels at the mouth of the river and secured it. The naval encounter had resulted in a complete victory for us.

News of this had been brought to Clive but an hour before. The good tidings lifted some of his anxiety. But the military forces of the Dutch, which were landed before the naval battle, were marching briskly northward and had still to be encountered. Throughout that day Clive had been guiding every move, writing every despatch, directing both our fleet and our land forces. Yet, strangely calm amid this stress, he sat now at whist, between the two battles, his brow knit over the deathless sequence of the cards.

Through the door a turbaned servant entered, *salaaming*. He announced a messenger with a despatch for Clive.

Clive took the note. It was from Forde, written from Chandernagore, which was still in the possession of the English.

The other three players studied Clive's face. The frown had been adjusted a little.

Forde explained that the Dutch forces were approaching nearer hourly. By dawn they should be within striking distance. If he attacked there was a fair prospect of success. He sought Clive's instructions in view of the treaties existing in Europe between the two countries.

Clive pushed aside the cards and spread the note out before him. A quill was brought, and at the foot of the note Clive scrawled: "Dear Forde—Fight 'em immediately. I will send an Order in Council tomorrow."

The messenger saluted and was gone. Clive then picked up his cards, raised his bushy eyebrows and resumed play. Early the next morning, at Biderra, Colonel Forde, who had hitherto been on the defensive, attacked, and in less than half an hour routed the Dutch. Clive described the engagement as 'short, bloody, and decisive'. The Dutch had 320 killed and 550 taken prisoner.

That completely destroyed all Dutch hope of succeeding France as Britain's rival in India. Clive's vigorous thrust had secured a complete triumph for the English.

Mir Jaffar was now absolutely in our power. There was no European alternative in Bengal to whom he could confidently turn. The goal for which Clive had striven had been attained. It was possible at last for him to leave India.

"With great concern I learnt that your resolution is fixed to return this season to Europe." The twenty-five-year-old Warren Hastings was sincere in this expression of his attachment to the Governor, who was but ten years his senior. Clive had singled him out for the delicate duties Watts had so skilfully performed at the Court of Murshidabad, and Hastings had already justified the choice by his enthusiasm and his tact. All the negotiations concerning the Dutch were transacted by Hastings. Clive and the man who was to throw a parallel shadow across India's history were at this period in close and almost daily contact.

"The disinterested regard," wrote Hastings in farewell, "which, without fearing the imputation of flattery, I may declare you have ever shown for the Company's welfare, convinces me that you would not have determined upon this step, were it in the least respect inconsistent with that principle. Yet permit me, Sir, upon this occasion, to lay before you such consequences as, from my little experience of the Durbar affairs, I apprehend may attend your absence.

"I am, and always have been, of opinion, that the Nabob is, both by interest and inclination, heartily attached to the English; but I think it as certain that the people about him, especially his Muttasaddies and the Seits, who are evidently great sufferers by the large acquisitions of power which the English have obtained in this Government, would gladly use every possible means to alienate his affections from us. At present, the personal obligations which he confessedly lies under to you are sufficient to intimidate them from any open attempts against us; but as your absence will encourage these people to throw off the mask, and the Nabob is but of an irresolute and unsettled temper, I don't think it possible that he can hold out against the united influence of so many evil counsellors, as will be perpetually instilling into his mind the necessity of reducing the English power. . . . As there is nobody to succeed you with the same influence and other advantages which you possess, nothing but a large military force will secure our privileges from being encroached upon, as soon as you quit the country."

Hastings' high Shakespearian forehead, his small studious eyes suggested the man of letters; which he was. But behind his scholarship, which had already led him into the acquiring of a knowledge of Bengali and of the Court language Persian, there was a calm, decisive

vigour that was to emblazon his name for good and ill across the age.

In his school at Westminster he formed some useful friendships. The poet Cowper, though loyal even in adversity, could not render the service of the little school fag Impey, who, as Chief Justice of Calcutta, was able to extricate Hastings from one of the most humiliating phases of his career. In this Nuncomar was involved, Nuncomar whom Omichand had bribed on behalf of Clive so that the Nawab's troops should stand idly by while the English pounced upon Chander-nagore. Some years later, for the craft that Clive practised on Omichand, the man Omichand had bribed was sent to his death by Hastings. Impey, to help the friend of his schooldays, tried Nuncomar for forgery, sentenced and hanged him in the presence of a vast and horrified multitude.

Destined to consolidate and extend the triumphs of his predecessor, Hastings was fated also to endure far greater humiliation and misery than Clive was called upon to face; but he survived them, witnessing the French Revolution, the rise of Napoleon and his downfall at Waterloo.

4

Jealousy, envy and whispers of malice had been busy at the Court of Directors. Urged by the application of such spurs and forgetful of the immense benefits they enjoyed through Clive's labours, they had for some months subjected him to petty rebukes and unworthy criticisms. Their letters took on a querulous tone. Every action was scrutinized; every decision questioned. Disappointed, irritated, Clive summoned his councillors and asked them to survey the situation.

"It is now," he said, "more than eighteen months that I have had the honour to sit in this chair and I call upon you, gentlemen, in the most solemn manner to vouch whether you do not think I have filled it with dignity and acted up to the duty of my station; whether amidst the many temptations which must have thrown themselves in my way I have not been proof against all corruption. I must further ask whether you do not think my only motive for consenting to stay in this country was the welfare and grandeur of the East India Company, and whether my conduct from first to last has not met with your approbation as well as that of the whole colony. If this be granted, what must be the reflection of those that have set their hands to a general

letter almost every paragraph of which abounds with the most unbecoming language. Such language dishonours the cause of the directors."

At Clive's instigation a stern letter of protest was drawn up in reply to these aspersions. It was signed by him and by four equally resentful members of the Council, including Holwell, the hero of the Black Hole.

"Permit us," they declared, "to say the diction of your letter is most unworthy yourselves and us, in whatever relation considered, either as masters to servants, or gentlemen to gentlemen. . . . Groundless informations have, without further scrutiny, borne with you the stamp of truth, though proceeding from those who had therein obviously their own purpose to serve, no matter at whose expense." The letter condemned the "general reflections thrown out at random against your faithful servants of this Presidency—faithful to little purpose if the breath of scandal, joined to private pique or private and personal attachments, have power to blow away in one hour the merits of many years' services, and deprive them of that rank and those rising benefits which are justly a spur to their integrity and application. The little attention shown to these considerations in the indiscriminate favours heaped on some individuals, and undeserved censures on others, will, we apprehend, lessen that spirit of zeal so very essential to the well-being of your affairs, and consequently, in the end, if continued, prove the destruction of them. Private views may, it is much to be feared, take the lead here, from examples at home, and no gentlemen hold your service longer, nor exert themselves further in it, than their own exigencies require. This being the real state of your service, it becomes strictly our duty to represent it in the strongest light".

Clive, though he was leaving India and the service, was not so foolhardy as to throw calculation to the winds when he allowed his resentment to vent itself in this letter. He realized that it would incense the directors, but with the signature of his Government to it, he realized also that it must prove a most damaging indictment of the existing method of allowing a trading corporation to rule these vast, newly-acquired presidencies. With Pitt's sympathetic interest this might be made a lever to further Clive's own ambitions of becoming Governor-General of British India. But Fate intervened with disastrous consequences.

Plassey. "Pshaw!" said his Majesty, when asked if a young peer might join the army of the King of Prussia. "Pshaw! What can he learn there? If he wants to learn the art of war, let him go to Clive!"

Popular enthusiasm was intense. Even the directors of the East India Company, resentful over that final letter which Clive had inspired and signed before leaving India, welcomed him as one by whose efforts the Company had profited greatly.

Clive was rich beyond dreams. Chroniclers in the news sheets estimated his wealth at considerably over a million; "his lady," it was recorded, "has a casket of jewels which are estimated at least at £200,000." It was generally agreed that Clive was His Majesty's richest subject. His known income was £45,000 a year. He acquired a palatial house in Berkeley Square, and furnished it with greater sumptuousness than any homing nabob had yet been able to display. His magnificence outshone the ostentation of his previous coming.

"General Clive is arrived, all over estates and diamonds," gossiped Horace Walpole. "If a beggar asks charity, he says 'Friend, I have no small brilliants about me.'" It became the fashion to use the word Clive for Croesus. What was beyond attainment was described as being within only Clive's power to purchase. When the cost of living rose, a pint of milk, it was moaned, "will not be sold under a diamond and nobody can keep a cow but my Lord Clive".

But within a few weeks of this joyous arrival, Clive was stretched out upon his bed by illness. The glamour of conquest and the distractions of governance had shut his consciousness to the rumble of disintegrating health. He had stayed too long in Bengal. His physique had weakened, the old complaint returned. For a year he lay helpless. At intervals even his mind was clouded. His distracted wife was at this time about to be delivered of her first daughter.

This long illness hampered Clive's aspirations and his schemes. The honour for which he had been striving was delayed, and, with the flagging of enthusiasm, was not as lofty as had at first been intended. Clive had expected to enter the House of Lords and to wear the red ribbon of the Bath. But after nearly a year of waiting he received merely an Irish peerage. Desirous of linking his Indian victory with his title, Clive bought an estate in Ireland and changed its name from Ballykilty to Plassey. His only hope of entering Parliament now was by the old channel of election that he had already tried on his previous homecoming with such havoc to his ambition and his fortune.

Clive was disappointed. "If less had been said," he wrote to the

Prime Minister, still the Duke of Newcastle, "I should have been less ambitious and consequently less unhappy." To a friend in India, he confessed: "If health had not deserted me on my first arrival in England, in all probability I had been an English peer, instead of an Irish one, with the promise of a red riband. I know I could have bought the title (which is usual), but that I was above, and the honours I have obtained are free and voluntary. My wishes may hereafter be accomplished."

Clive's illness also restrained the hand that he had raised to snatch dominion from the clutch of a trading corporation. While Clive was powerless to further his schemes the Company's directors, led by Sullivan, whom Clive had but lately supported as a friend, whispered and plotted his destruction.

3

Sullivan's friendship for Clive was destroyed by two letters, both written by Clive: the letter to Pitt and the letter sent to the directors before his departure from Calcutta. Sullivan regarded it as an act of gross insubordination that the Governor of a province, who was a servant of the Company, should suggest to a Minister any curtailment of the Company's power. The second letter incensed him even more by its vigour, its tone of disrespect, and its insulting rebukes. In his anger Sullivan took summary action against all the signatories still in the service of the Company. They were dismissed forthwith. Orders were issued that "they be not permitted, on any consideration, to remain in India, but that they are to be sent to England by the first ship which return home the same season you receive this letter". By his vindictive removal of men of long service, experience and executive ability, Bengal was deprived of helpful guidance which might have restrained, if not prevented, the evils of misgovernment that followed.

Against Clive, who was no longer in the service, it did not seem possible that any action could be taken. But Sullivan was resolved that he should not escape. It was in the power of the Company, he realized with an anticipatory smile, to harm Clive through his *jaghir*, the income of which was the rental payable by the Company to the Nawab. The transfer of this to Clive by Mir Jaffar was now disputed by Sullivan. To Clive's sick bed tormentors were sent to question his right to the *jaghir*. Sullivan thus proposed to deprive Clive of the greater part of his income. Ill, weak, mentally obscured, Clive was unable to

deal with these cowardly assaults; but, with returning health, he engaged with his enemies in as strenuous an encounter as he had ever fought on the plains of India.

4

Clive went to Bath to recoup. The Bath of gallants and gay ladies. The Bath of Beau Nash, who now lay dying at the age of eighty-seven after having won fame and fortune where fifty years before he had come for the crumbs from the gaming tables. Bath, the chief pleasure and health resort in the kingdom.

It repaired and invigorated him. Returning to town he plunged into the strenuous excitement of an election. He mustered a band of supporters and bought up boroughs for them. All were elected. It was a corrupt political age and Clive's wealth gave him both influence and power. He was himself elected the member for Shrewsbury, chief town of his native county, and entered Parliament wearing Pitt's colours. Even the royal circle was entered. The youthful George the Third, but lately raised to the throne of his grandfather, had dutifully abandoned the Lady Sarah Lennox he adored, to settle down with a plump German princess, Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz—fair, full-mouthed, snub-nosed and little more than a child; for whose rapidly increasing issue he was soon to buy Buckingham House, as St. James's Palace was not large enough to contain them. Clive was welcomed at Court. To a child born to Lady Clive early in 1762 the Queen stood godmother, conferring her own name of Charlotte on the girl. Even Clive's presumptuous father came to Court and was heard to declare in a loud voice at a levee when the King inquired after Clive: "He will be in town very soon and then your Majesty will have another vote."

The country had just seen Pitt and Newcastle driven from office to make way for the Earl of Bute, a haughty, narrow-minded, middle-aged Scotsman without ability or experience, whose sole qualification for the Premiership was his scandalous intimacy with the King's mother. Within a few weeks, while driving to the Lord Mayor's banquet, the young sovereign and his bride were snubbed by London's throngs, who waited for Pitt's coach and hailed it with cries of 'Pitt for ever!' Bute was hissed and pelted by an infuriated mob near the Guildhall.

But popular clamour was ignored. Bute remained in office. Urged by the King, his one concern was to detach England from the Conti-

mental entanglement that Pitt had maintained with varying fortune and at so appalling a cost—the entanglement which had involved us in the Seven Years War. Lacking ourselves in generalship, we had hitherto been constrained to raise our glasses to the impressive triumphs of Frederic of Prussia against Maria Theresa of Austria, the Empress Elizabeth of Russia and the soldiers of Madame de Pompadour.

Peace was concluded. We withdrew our troops. The guns ceased to shake the vast plains of America and the coconut coast of the Coromandel. George Washington, a colonel at twenty-two, rich and distinguished at twenty-eight, settled down with his wife and his slaves at Mount Vernon to the life of a prosperous Virginia planter. The dissolute, ageing Duc de Richelieu gladly surrendered the rigours of campaigning for the boudoirs of his full-bosomed mistresses.

Bute, aware of Clive's wealth and conscious of his influence, made at the King's prompting overtures for his support, but Clive preferred to be independent. "The times are so critical," he wrote to India, "that every member has an opportunity of fixing a price upon his services. I still continue to be one of those unfashionable kind of people who think very highly of independency, and to bless my stars, indulgent fortune has enabled me to act according to my conscience. Being very lately asked by authority, if I had any honours to ask from my sovereign, my answer was, that I thought it dishonourable to take advantage of the times; but that when these parliamentary disputes were at an end if his Majesty should then approve of my conduct by rewarding it, I should think myself highly honoured in receiving any marks of the royal favour."

But though he would not serve Bute, Clive was eager to have a hand in drawing up the peace treaty with France, in so far as the terms affected India. He drew up a long and carefully-prepared memorandum, but the Prime Minister cast it aside and sought instead the assistance of Lawrence Sullivan, his friend, his staunchest supporter in Parliament and Chairman of the East India Company. Clive was furious. He saw in the Treaty of Paris concessions to France of which he could not approve. Chandernagore, even Pondicherry, but recently wrested from the French, were magnanimously restored to them. Clive voted against the treaty; but he was in an inconsiderable minority. Bute had triumphed and, what was worse, Sullivan had triumphed.

Clive saw that the hour had come to fight Sullivan and to strip him of the authority and power that he had been directing to Clive's destruction.

CHAPTER XXX

Worse Than The Black Hole

I

THE corporation of which Sullivan was the elected head had been launched by Queen Elizabeth the First in 1600. Its privilege of trade was exclusive, as Pitt's grandfather had found while interloping. It also had the right to rent land and to erect factories.

Those early voyages of mercantile adventure were charged with hopes of grandeur and attended by danger. Captains who had the luck to return were hailed with all the enthusiasm bestowed in our own day upon lone Atlantic flyers. Knighthoods were conferred on them. Every new Indiaman was launched by the King. The royal family even banqueted on board on the eve of an enterprise. With success each venture yielded an abundant harvest, ranging from 96 to over 200 per cent on the cost of the expedition.

Elizabeth's charter, renewable after fifteen years, was graciously converted by James the First into a monopoly in perpetuity. But subsequent rulers, needful of money, shut their eyes to the pledge and sold licences indiscriminately to rival corporations, arguing that the East India Company had been neglectful of the interests of the English.

From Charles the Second the East India Company acquired extraordinary privileges with which it was possible for Clive to carve out an empire. Charles permitted the Company to employ troops, erect forts, acquire territory, form alliances, and even govern, with civil and criminal authority over their subjects. We set up our first factory at Surat, where the Portuguese had started and where the Dutch had followed. Permission for this was extracted from the Emperor Jehanghir, to whom James the First had sent a letter of greeting and an ambassador. Into Bengal we were ushered by an odd circumstance. Jehanghir's successor, the Emperor Shah Jahan, whose devotion as a husband to Mumtaz Mahal is emblazoned in the marbled glory of the Taj at Agra, was incontinent enough to kill his beloved with child-bearing, and while still he mourned her, his daughter, favourite among the fourteen children she had left, lay severely burned and was said to be dying. Court physicians were unable to save her. In despair

the Emperor begged the English to send a doctor. One was despatched from Surat; his skill saved the life of the princess. Told to name his reward, the doctor, with sublime self-denial, asked merely that his employers, the Company, should be accorded the privilege of trading in Bengal. The request was granted.

The Company waged a relentless war on all rivals; with those it could not crush it amalgamated. But it was insistent on its monopoly. Control of its ever-growing trade and its vast acquisitions was exercised from an unpretentious City office in Leadenhall Street. All shareholders possessing £500 of stock were entitled to attend the Court of Proprietors and to vote. From among those who held £2,000 of stock was annually elected the Court of Directors, twenty-four in number; and from these a Chairman and a Deputy-Chairman.

Sullivan, having held office for four successive years, was unable to stand for election in 1762, but early in the following year he offered himself again. Resolved to overthrow him, Clive bought up £100,000 of stock and distributed it in £500 shares among his supporters, thus providing himself with 200 votes. He was promised in addition the support of numberless friends—divines, ministers, lawyers, tradesmen, all with holdings in India stock.

The fight had begun. Clive's *jaghir* was at stake; but success seemed already within his grasp.

2

On the eve of the election the issue seemed scarcely in doubt. "Our cause gains ground daily," Clive exulted in a letter to Vansittart. The Chairman's office indeed seemed his for the mere asking; but that was not within the field of Clive's ambitions. "I have no thought of ever accepting the Chair," he informed Vansittart. "I have neither application, knowledge, nor time, to undertake so laborious an employ. I shall confine myself to the political and military operations; and I think I may promise you shall have a large military force in India, such a force as will leave little to apprehend from our enemies in those parts."

But Clive was a little premature. The unexpected happened. Sullivan's backing was large. The richest merchants and bankers in the City lined up to support him. Together they cast into the balance more votes than Clive with all his vast wealth could muster.

Sullivan won; and without any loss of time he set in motion the mills of vengeance. Within a few hours of his re-election, Sullivan sent

the following instructions to the Governor and Council of Calcutta: "With respect to the jagueer given by Nabob Jaffier Aly Khan to Lord Clive arising out of the lands granted by the said Nabob to the Company, we direct that you do not pay any further sums to the attorneys of Lord Clive on that account, and we further direct that whatever shall arise in future from the said jagueer be carried to our credit; you are to cause exact accounts to be made out and transmitted to us not only of what shall so come into our cash, but also of all sums Lord Clive's attorneys have already received on the said account together with the dates of the several payments. His lordship's pretensions to the said jagueer will be settled here."

Clive, learning of this, sent an urgent personal note to Vansittart, the friend he had elevated to the dignity of Governor of Calcutta. He begged Vansittart to act as his attorney. "Do justice to your friend," he urged, "without injuring the Company; for I am satisfied, the more this affair is inquired into, the more it will be to my honour." As a safeguard, in case Vansittart declined, Clive wrote also to Major Carnac, who had left Clive's ship at St. Helena, on this recent homecoming, to succeed Caillaud as Commander-in-Chief in Bengal. Clive had maintained a brisk, even intimate, correspondence with him. He directed Carnac now, "in case the Governor and Council should retain my money, or refuse giving bills of exchange, you (or whoever acts as my attorney) are immediately to commence a suit at law against the Company and to transmit a very exact account of all your proceedings, that it may be taken up in England."

Clive sought the best legal opinion in London. It was held that the directors' orders were illegal. Both the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General declared that the Company's own claim to that land was based on no better authority than Clive's to the *jaghir*.

A suit was promptly filed by Clive against the Company.

3

In Bengal, meanwhile, the evils against which Clive had warned Vansittart were sweeping the province to disaster.

Within a few weeks of Vansittart's arrival in Calcutta to assume the Governorship, venality and corruption raised their hideous heads. Mir Miran, Jaffar's heir, had died a few days before, struck down opportunely by lightning just as he had begun to get restive against his

father. Mir Cossim, son-in-law of the Nawab, instantly displayed an interest in the succession. He had served Mir Jaffar by arresting the flight of Suraj-ud-Dowlah when the mutilated mendicant recognized that wretched ruler in Rajmahal. He now made overtures to the English, hopeful that just as they had elevated Jaffar for a price so they would render him a like service. And, since personal profit was involved and Clive's affluence was a goading example, the Governor and Council lent attentive ears to the conspirator.

Mir Cossim offered £200,000 and suggested that a more reliable means than lightning might be employed for the removal of his father-in-law; but that proposal was not received by us with enthusiasm. We preferred treaties to assassination.

A pact was eventually made with Mir Cossim. Mir Jaffar was stripped of all his rights. His authority, his power were transferred to his son-in-law. Jaffar protested and struggled, but he was persuaded by force, and in his helplessness had to surrender. Within three months of Vansittart assuming office the man Clive had set up at Plassey was dragged off his throne. Jaffar realized now more than ever how staunch a friend he had lost on Clive's departure. With a sad heart he abdicated. He had been elevated to the throne by treachery and by the blood of his nephew; and now, in his fall, he begged us to let him live in Calcutta so that his own blood might not be shed by his son-in-law.

His plea was granted. He was escorted to Calcutta and lodged within sound of the festive laughter of the Members of Council, whose pockets bulged with the lakhs of rupees handed out to them by the new Nawab in grateful magnanimity. Holwell, whose order of dismissal had not yet reached India, benefited to the extent of £30,000; Vansittart by almost twice that sum.

And now into the history of India was inserted the most shameful phase of Britain's association. Envious of the money that Members of Council had twice acquired, every white man was seized with an overwhelming desire to plunder. There was a race for riches. Men vied with each other to see who could retire in the fewest number of months. Junior writers, still restricted to salaries of only five pounds a year, rode in gorgeous *palanquins* and kept seraglios. They plundered the populace by the misappropriation of privileges granted to the Company. Passes that had exempted the Company's goods from delays and exactions at the innumerable customs barriers on every road and river, they applied to their own inland trade and even sold such passes recklessly to every native who was prepared to pay their

price. Unscrupulous rogues swarmed all over the country with these permits and cheated the Nawab of his revenues. So, while the State exchequer shrank, vast private fortunes were being shipped across the seas to Britain.

Mir Cossim complained bitterly, but his protests were ignored. Goods were bought by force below the market value and sold by our agents in excess of the market price. Officials who dared to question the validity of any of the passes were seized and beaten. The Governor and Warren Hastings pleaded in vain. The Council and the merchants repudiated the concessions with which Vansittart strove to placate the Nawab, arresting and punishing all Cossim's agents who dared to apply them. Thirty million people writhed in Bengal while an unprincipled pack gathered in the gold mohurs.

To ease the sufferings of his people and also because not enough was being collected to pay the host of officials employed at the toll posts, Mir Cossim swept away all dues. But this action was denounced by our traders as a breach of the peace! We insisted on the duties being restored so that the passes might confer a market advantage on our goods.

Cossim's only means now of maintaining his revenues was by squeezing money out of the rich Hindus, a process which his predecessor had employed with advantage though not without embarrassment. Some of Cossim's victims appealed for our protection; others began to conspire his undoing. But we did not care who were broken on the governmental wheel so long as our profits remained unimpaired. Ram Narrain, the pock-marked ruler of Patna, guaranteed by Clive of our grateful support, was flung heartlessly to the Nawab. Both Carnac, and later Eyre Coote, strove to protect him; but the Nawab complained that "Colonel Coote in great passion with his horsemen, peons, sepoyes and others, with a cocked pistol in each hand, came uttering Goddammees into my tent. It so happened that I was asleep in the Zenana,¹ and none of my guards were present. How shall I express the unbecoming manner in which the Colonel went about from tent to tent, with thirty-five horsemen and two hundred seepoyes calling out, 'Where is the Nabob?'" The only outcome of this intervention was the recall of Coote.

Vansittart was weak. He had neither the ability to restrain the avarice of his people, nor the courage to defy the desperate designs of the Nawab.

¹Women's quarter.

4

The evil spread. Every Indian trader begged or borrowed money in order to purchase our passes. Those who failed were greatly penalized. Warren Hastings, now a Member of the Council in Calcutta, wrote to Vansittart in terms that would have roused one of sterner fibre into instant action.

"I beg leave to lay before you," said Hastings, "a grievance which calls loudly for redress, and will, unless duly attended to, render ineffectual any endeavours to create a firm or lasting harmony between the Nabob and the Company; I mean the oppressions committed under the sanction of the English name, and through the want of spirit in the Nabob's subjects to oppose them. This evil, I am well assured, is not confined to our dependents alone, but is practiced all over the country by people falsely assuming the habits of our sepoys, or calling themselves our gomastahs.¹ As, on such occasions, the great power of the English intimidates the people from making any resistance, so on the other hand, the indolence of the Bengalees, or the difficulty of gaining access to those who might do them justice, prevents our having knowledge of the oppressions, and encourages their continuance, to the great though unmerited scandal of our government. I have been surprised to meet with several English flags flying in places which I have passed; and on the river I do not believe that I passed a boat without one. By whatever title they have been assumed (for I could only trust to the information of my eyes, without stopping to ask questions), I am sure their frequency can bode no good to the Nabob's revenues, to the quiet of the country, or to the honour of our nation; but evidently tend to lessen each of them."

No check was applied. Nothing was done. It seemed to the Nawab that the breaking-point was inevitably near. He prepared for war. There was no other way out.

He had already replaced most of the army he had inherited from Mir Jaffar. For the timid Bengali he had substituted the sturdy fighters of the northern frontierland—Afghans, Tartars, Persians. He enticed men, white and black, from our ranks and enlisted a host of the cosmopolitan adventurers who swaggered through the bazaars of India—Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards, who picked up a living, trading, bluffing, wheedling money out of princelings and, when all

¹Agents,

else failed, shouldering a gun for anyone who cared to pay their hire. He introduced European dress, discipline and drill, and appointed a German butcher turned soldier, Walter Reinhardt, known locally as Sumroo, to the chief command. Still further to protect his position, Cossim moved his capital from Murshidabad to the distant hill fortress of Monghyr, from where he angled with success for allies.

Vansittart and Hastings battled bravely but ineffectually with the Calcutta Council. "Such a system of government," Hastings observed, "cannot fail to create in the minds of the wretched inhabitants an abhorrence of the English name and authority; and how will it be possible for the Nabob, whilst he hears the cries of his people, which he cannot redress, not to wish to free himself from an alliance which subjects him to such indignities?"

Lacking the authority to restrain the oppressors himself, Hastings could do no more than indicate the evils to Vansittart, who lacked the ability to achieve anything. A man of Clive's uncompromising vigour was required. Vansittart merely protested. There was only one man in Bengal at this time who displayed any stern attributes, Mr. Ellis, chief of our factory at Patna; but his energies were directed to the support of the avaricious, whom he shielded with a patriotic gesture as his countrymen. He did not waste time on words, but assembled all the sepoy within reach and, as a foretaste of what he intended, despatched them to seize "all who were interrupting the Company's business". There was a clash with the Nawab's troops; and blood was shed.

A period of waiting followed during which both sides indulged in alternate outbursts of negotiation and anger. Mir Cossim secured the support of the rebellious Moghul heir, who was now the Emperor, though without a throne and without an Empire. His capital, where his helpless father had been murdered, was in the hands of a covetous Vizier. He had appointed as his own Vizier, the villainous Nawab of Oudh. Their troops assembled on Bengal's frontier and Cossim gathered together his own men, galled at the thought that the English army, which under the terms of the treaty he was paying for his protection, was soon to be used against him.

Ellis, impetuous, precipitate, resolved to anticipate the enemy. The fort and city of Patna which, since the deposition of Ram Narrain had been garrisoned by Cossim, lay at his mercy. On the 24th of June, 1763, a day after the anniversary of Plassey, he strove to emulate Clive by plunging into action. He acted independently of the Calcutta

Council and of the rest of Bengal. By night he attacked the walls of Patna with two hundred Europeans and two battalions of sepoy. Taken by surprise, the city surrendered after little fighting.

Then Ellis made a mistake that Clive would never have made. He allowed his sepoy to disperse and to indulge in plunder. They rifled the houses, while the Europeans riotously celebrated their easy victory. The small hours were filled with revelry. Our little army was scattered and jubilant.

The Nawab's troops, meanwhile, reassembled and returned. They found the revellers unarmed, unprepared. Hurriedly the Europeans took shelter in their factory, but, finding it impossible to hold, fled. The Nawab's troops dashed after them in hot pursuit. One hundred and fifty white men were overtaken and captured, including Mr. Ellis.

Encouraged by this success, Mir Cossim attacked and seized our scattered factories at Cossimbazar and Dacca, taking still more prisoners. The Calcutta Council assembled in anger and acknowledged their mistake in substituting Mir Cossim for Mir Jaffar. The positions, they decided, would have to be reversed. The old Nawab would be restored. They were resolved to erase their error from the pages of history.

Emissaries were sent to the prison-house of Mir Jaffar. Bent, infirm, and well over seventy, the exiled ruler was told he must return to the exaltation, the glory and the glittering pageantry from which he had ruthlessly been dragged down. It was only a semblance of the old glory, for his finances were to be supervised and his army taken from him.

With a gesture of resignation, Jaffar submitted. He was conducted by our army to Murshidabad, encountering vigorous resistance from his son-in-law all along the route. At Katwa, which Coote had captured just before Plassey, at Plassey itself, even on the outskirts of the old capital, we fought and defeated the forces of a Nawab reluctant to surrender the dignity to which we had raised him.

On the 24th of July, 1763, Mir Jaffar was again proclaimed Nawab of the triple provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. His reinstatement was bought with fiercer fighting and greater bloodshed than his initial installation.

With his allies not yet ready to strike, Mir Cossim realized that the only thing left him to save was his life. He would not risk a stand

in his hill fortress of Monghyr; but strove to gain the frontier. Yet, with the English army advancing relentlessly upon him, escape seemed doubtful. His despair clawed the air for hope and brightened suddenly as he remembered his prisoners. He had a host of prisoners—English prisoners, who should provide a serviceable basis of negotiation, the price of his life and freedom. The natives he realized were worthless. He resolved to disencumber himself of them. The two Seits, grandsons of the famous Hindu banker, were beheaded. His own kinsmen were put to the sword. Ram Narrain was drowned in the Ganges with a bag of sand tied round his neck. But the English prisoners were unharmed. He assembled them—they numbered one hundred and fifty—and hitched the helpless band to his suite, warning the English soldiers in pursuit, "If you are resolved on your own authority to proceed in this business, know for a certainty that I will cut off the heads of Mr. Ellis and the rest of your chiefs, and send them to you."

Ellis proved now that the patriotism which had made him support his countrymen, right or wrong, was more than a vague gesture. He urged the pursuing English "that no consideration of our situation should prevent the army from proceeding in their operation". It was a sublime and sincere impulse; to serve it he was prepared to sacrifice his own head.

The English army continued its pursuit. "It is true," he told the Nawab, "you have Mr. Ellis and many other gentlemen in your power; if a hair of their heads is hurt, you can have no title to mercy from the English, and you may depend upon the utmost fury of their resentment, and that they will pursue you to the extremity of the earth; and should we unfortunately not lay hold of you, the vengeance of the Almighty cannot fail overtaking you, if you perpetrate so horrid an act as the murder of the gentlemen in your custody."

Slowly the army gained on Mir Cossim; and barbarously he carried out his threat. On the 5th of October, 1763, the German butcher known as Sumroo arrived with two companies of sepoy at the prison at Patna where our prisoners were kept. The troops surrounded the place, scrambled on to the roofs, and levelled their muskets on the central courtyard. Knives and forks, everything that could be used by the prisoners in self-defence, had previously been removed.

Then the ghastly tragedy began. The principal prisoners were invited outside. Unsuspecting they came, and were viciously hacked down. At the same time the sepoy opened fire on the courtyard,

where the rest of the prisoners were assembled. The slaughter was appalling. Those who fled indoors were pursued. Frantically they seized plates, bottles, bricks, bits of furniture, anything to save themselves. Even the sepoy begged that the prisoners should be given arms, as it was neither brave nor soldierly to butcher the helpless. But Sumroo was without qualms. In his rage he struck at those who showed any humanity. The terrible slaughter went on. By evening a hundred and fifty corpses of white men, most of them civilians, were flung into an adjacent well. It was a tragedy more ghastly even than the Black Hole, and it was committed at the direct instigation of Mir Cossim, whom Clive's successors had placed upon the throne of Suraj-ud-Dowlah.

His Third Voyage Out

I

THE news reached England on the 4th of February, 1764, a few months after the despatch of Sullivan's instructions to the Governor and Council of Calcutta to stop any further payment on Clive's *jaghir*. The tragedy shook the country. The shareholders of the East India Company met in trepidation. For months they had heard of nothing but the corruption of their servants in Bengal; and they were beginning to realize at last why their profits had been dwindling.

The situation demanded drastic action. None but the man who had avenged the Black Hole and had laid the foundations of their fortunes in Bengal could, the shareholders were agreed, extricate them from this deplorable plight. So, assembled in general court, they formally "requested Lord Clive to take upon himself the station of President of Bengal, and the command of the Company's military forces there".

Clive was himself present at this meeting as a shareholder. He saw his hour had come. Fate had played into Sullivan's hands during Clive's long illness. The subsequent battle upon the financial check-board had also been lost by Clive. His income had been threatened, his character impugned. Now fate had swung it round to him again. Before Clive lay the moves that commanded the game. And Clive, if anyone, knew how to play them.

He rose to his feet. The meeting thundered its applause and then quietened itself into a tense, expectant silence. Clive glanced up at Sullivan and the directors, then narrowed his small dark eyes on his fellow-shareholders. His lips were pursed and slightly twisted, as though to control his exultation. Then his arm shot forward and his lips moved.

"If the directors are as well disposed towards me as I am towards them," he said slowly, in deep, clear tones, vibrant with their underlying design, "then I have no objection to undertaking this service. But till I find such a disposition, I desire to be excused from coming to any resolution."

Significant glances were exchanged by the directors. They too knew that Clive's hour had come; but they hoped that by protestations of goodwill they would be able to bluff it through. After careful deliberation for some days, they wrote to Clive "that they were *unanimous* in assuring him, that they would most cheerfully concur in taking the steps necessary to carry the resolution of the general court into effect, and in preparing every convenience for his passage".

But this assurance did not satisfy Clive. He sent a curt, non-committal reply. "I have received your letter," he told the secretary, "enclosing a copy of the resolution of the general court. I must desire you will return the directors my thanks for their offers of preparing every convenience for my passage."

Four days later the general court assembled again. All were aware that no time should be lost. The directors in particular were anxious that Clive should be out of the country before the annual elections, due in barely a month. To force the issue, they asked Clive publicly at this meeting to give an immediate answer, accepting or declining the appointment. But Clive refused to be trapped. He would defer his decision, he said, until after the election of directors.

The directors retaliated with an attempt to annul the appointment. But the shareholders stood stubbornly behind Clive. They wanted him, even if they had to wait.

Then Sullivan rose in a last desperate effort to rush Clive into a decision. With a magnificent gesture of sincerity he solemnly assured the house that he would co-operate with Clive in the most honourable and friendly manner. It would have appeared ungracious if Clive now scorned the gesture; yet it would have been folly had he accepted it at its face value. He begged for time to consider this offer of co-operation.

It was granted. But Clive's mind was already made up. He wrote to the directors a week later: "I still continue to be of the opinion that, in case the Proprietors think it for their advantage that Mr. Sullivan should remain at the head of the Direction (or, as he was pleased to term it himself, should continue him in the lead of their affairs), I cannot accept their service; but in case the Proprietors should not think it necessary to continue Mr. Sullivan in such authority, I am willing and ready to accept their service, even supposing the next advices should pronounce their affairs in Bengal to be in as desperate a condition as ever they were in the time of Suraja Dowla. Should a Direction be settled with whom I can *possibly* co-operate, everything

will be easily adjusted, since I have no interested views in going abroad. At the same time, I never desired, or even wished, to name a Direction, as some industriously spread abroad; I only object to one man having the lead in the Company's affairs, in whom I have so often and publicly declared I never can place any confidence, and who, in my opinion, has acted, and does continue to act, upon principles diametrically opposite to the true interest of the East India Company."

His attitude was uncompromising. He refused to yield an inch. There could be no truce in his feud with Sullivan. The shareholders understood and at the elections thrust a staunch supporter of Clive into the chair. The deputy-chairmanship was also given to a Clive adherent.

Triumphant, Clive insisted before taking the oath as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Bengal, on a settlement of all outstanding questions. There was his *jaghir*, for instance. He offered by way of accommodation to abandon all further claim to his income if it was paid to him for a term of ten years. This was agreed to. Clive also insisted on the removal of Mr. Spencer, Deputy-Governor of Bengal. This was also done. Clive next sought the power to overrule his entire Council; but the new directorate, though abject in their admiration and support, refused to go so far. They furnished him, however, with a Select Committee of four, most of whom were already Clive's ardent supporters, and empowered them to act with him independently of the Council: which in effect invested Clive with the dictatorial power he sought. The precaution was less a vanity than a necessity, which Clive had wisdom enough to foresee; for Warren Hastings, when later he became Governor of Bengal, was repeatedly overruled by his obstinate Council, and Pigot, in his second term as Governor of Madras, was even seized by his councillors and flung into prison, where he remained until his death.

Clive sailed for India for the third time on the 4th of June, 1764, attended by a personal staff of nearly twenty aides-de-camp, stewards, musicians, valets.

2

A little woman sat in her exquisite boudoir in Berkeley Square, alone with her anxieties and her grief.

Her lids drooped; her eyes were sad. Her head was bent at a

pensive angle. Her thoughts were out at sea, tossing upon the restless waters. Still very young, for she was only in her twenties, she had devoted her energies unsparingly to the care of her husband, whose health needed much care, and to the upbringing of children who arrived at the rate of one almost every year and gave considerable anxiety in their rearing. As still another was expected now, her husband had this time to sail to the East alone—the first long parting since their marriage nearly a dozen years before. She had waited in Bombay, near at hand, while he drove the pirates out of Gheriah; she had hurried to Calcutta from Madras as soon as Plassey made it obvious that Clive must remain in Bengal. He had intended to send her home with his fortune, but in her devotion she had refused to leave him. Guarding his health, ministering to his moods, sharing his problems, encouraging him by her smiles, she had converted the love-at-first-sight that had been roused within him by her portrait, into an ardent, abiding companionship, that she knew he too was missing now in separation.

To his private secretary Henry Strachey, whose family Clive had gallantly rescued from financial embarrassment, Lady Clive gave written instructions for the care and comfort of her husband. "Mr. Strachey will remember to write to Lady Clive, and let her know how my Lord does while at Portsmouth, and ever after when opportunity offers." She told him of what to remind his lordship, what to pay Clive's private musicians ("Lady Clive hopes to see the music come back safe"), and whom to recommend to his lordship's special favour.

It was a solace, as she sat in her boudoir, to know that with Clive were her brother Edmund, his closest friend and now his aide-de-camp, Dr. Ingham, the family physician, and Sumner and Sykes, two devoted adherents, who were to serve on Clive's Select Committee.

A knock on the door roused Lady Clive from her reverie. A letter was handed her, addressed in her husband's writing. It came from Portsmouth.

"My dearest wife," it said, "God only knows how much I have suffered in my separation from the best of women. However the necessity of the thing and your good sense will, I am persuaded, operate in the same manner upon you as it has upon me. Let us look forward towards the happy day of our meeting which I think cannot be further distant than two years. The education of our children will be a pleasing amusement and the busy scene in which I shall be

employed without embarking on any more military undertakings will greatly shorten our time of absence.

"We shall be on board the *Kent* in two or three hours and sail immediately the wind being fair. You may be assured of hearing from me the first opportunity, which I believe will be from the Cape. Adieu. Your affectionate, Clive."

Tears filled her eyes. The necessity of the thing! She understood. He had sailed only because it had become necessary to defend his character. He was returning to India to show that he could serve disinterestedly, without stuffing his own pockets with diamonds. That is why he had voluntarily undertaken "not to enrich himself one farthing by any pay or emoluments", nor to engage in any trade. With his wealth, with his country houses, his fine London residence, his magnificent coaches, the undertaking was not so much a sacrifice, as a penance; as was indeed this long tedious voyage and the years he was reluctantly tearing out of his gilded leisure to spend in the insalubrity of Bengal. By his very acceptance of office he had stilled the tongue of slander. He had stayed the hand stretched out to snatch his *jaghir*. By the reforms he meant to effect, by the eventual enrichment of his masters and the ordering of their affairs, he hoped to earn enough of their gratitude to keep malice from dogging him to the grave.

Yes, Lady Clive realized the necessity that had taken her husband from her; yet she could not help shuddering at the thoughts provoked by his impaired health and at the reflection that more than a year might pass before she heard how he fared.

3

In India, meanwhile, our troops galloped forward to avenge the massacre of Ellis and the other prisoners at Patna. They seized the city; but Mir Cossim had already fled with Sumroo across the border. The Nawab of Oudh was called upon to surrender the refugees, but he confronted us with a defiant army, swelled by the adventurers who had flocked to the standard of the homeless Emperor. At Buxar this vast allied force was routed by Major Hector Munro. Thousands perished in the fight. The Nawab of Oudh fled; his principality was occupied. The Emperor himself surrendered to the English. Mir Cossim escaped to Delhi, where he roamed the streets penniless and died later in despair. Sumroo too escaped with his mercenary

horde, to whose command the pretty nautch-girl he had married succeeded on his death and patterned herself on Catherine the Great, who was then shocking all Europe. She smiled eagerly on young officers who were tall and handsome, ruled from the palace at Sardhana which had been given to her husband as a *jaghir*, and in old age succumbed to religion, building cathedrals and endowing colleges for priests.

In Bengal, Mir Jaffar, feeble, a little bewildered by the strange succession of events, found himself faced with new demands for money from the English. He had sought neither his abdication nor his reinstatement, yet he was made to purchase both dearly. For the cost of our disputes with Mir Cossim, the man Cossim had injured with our aid was forced to pay the vast sum of £300,000. And that was not all. Individuals also sought compensation. They called it 'reimbursement for personal losses', which with reckless self-indulgence they estimated at £100,000. Mir Jaffar did not demur, he could not demur; so the demand was raised to £530,000. We also extorted a further £250,000 as a gift for the army and navy.

In his dazed dejection news was brought to Mir Jaffar that Clive was returning to India. The old eyes flamed again with their earlier light. His lips parted in a suppressed, choking cry of joy. How great a friend Clive had really been, how much he missed that unwavering support, how much he had suffered in the years that had followed Clive's departure, it was impossible for Jaffar's weakening mind to estimate. His delight knew no bounds. He was resolved to be among the first to greet Clive. He hurried to Calcutta.

None could tell when Clive would arrive. The ships were at the mercy of the seas and voyages could not be regulated by the calendar. For more than ten months, Clive, who had done the homeward voyage in little more than four, was tossed along and was again blown across the Atlantic to Brazil. He did not reach Madras until April, 1765. He learned there of Mir Jaffar's death. The aged Nawab, excited, expectant, waited restlessly in our settlement for the ship that did not come. Slowly death crept upon him. Would it anticipate that longed-for meeting with Clive? With difficulty they carried the dying Jaffar all the way back to his capital, and there two months before Clive's arrival he died of leprosy. To the last he thought of Clive, and as a touching tribute left him £70,000 to add to the vast fortune he had already given. Clive could not accept the money; nor did he want it. He applied it to the service that had brought him so much glory

and profit, creating a fund for the care of the wounded and of the widows and orphans of soldiers.

4

Clive's journey out was long and tedious. Lapped for over four years in every luxury that his vast fortune could provide, he found the cabined discomfort of a restless sailing ship most trying. The weather was cruel. There were many minor irritations. In Brazil the Viceroy, attracted one night at dinner by the excellence of Clive's orchestra, lured the musicians into his own service. There followed an unpleasant interchange of letters, in which Clive bared his teeth in anger, while the Viceroy was evasive with Portuguese suavity, pretending he knew nothing of the affair, promising repeatedly to arrest the scoundrels and restore them to Clive. But Clive's scouts anticipated him by seizing one of the men and dragging him back to the ship. At the Cape of Good Hope this musician was sent ashore with a homeward passage by another ship.

Surprised at Rio de Janeiro by a letter from his wife, borne by a later Indiaman that had also been blown across the Atlantic, Clive poured out his delight to her: "The Commodore immediately waited upon me on board and brought with him my dearest wife's most welcome letter. Nothing could afford me greater pleasure than to find you reconciled to my departure in a manner consistent with that good sense which I know you to be mistress of, and consistent with that superior duty which you owe to our children. Never entertain the least doubt of our meeting again and that soon. . . .

"I cannot help rejoicing on many other accounts than those already mentioned that you did not accompany us to India. Besides a most tedious and disagreeable passage to this place of more than four months, we encountered many other inconveniences which would have given me great concern on your account, especially in your then condition. The captain, a young man and who had never before been a captain, had provided for us but very indifferently and without the assistance of Hern and the cook we should have been starved. As it was for the last six weeks we were reduced to poor Alice's diet, pork and pease pudding, and to add still to our misfortune we found in Mrs. Sumner¹ a woman of most diabolical disposition, ignorant, ill-

¹Wife of a member of Clive's Select Committee.

tempered, and selfish to the highest degree. She seemed possessed of every disagreeable quality which ever belonged to the female sex without being mistress of one virtue (charity excepted) to throw into the opposite scale. It is with the utmost difficulty we can behave with common civility towards her and I would not upon any consideration whatever you had been the companion and passenger of such a woman. One of the blessed effects of this lady's being on board was that we all caught cold, your humble servant being the greatest sufferer and which he has not got entirely the better of to this day, for this lady, being cool in nothing but body, insisted that all doors and windows should be constantly open, untill the inconvenience became dangerous and insupportable and then I was obliged to make use of some authority. In short I believe she is heartily as tired of us as we are of her. To give you a specimen of this lady's natural abilities, she gave us to understand that she understood music and could play upon the harpsichord, and to convince us of this she has been playing two hum drum tunes for four hours every day since she has been on board (Sunday excepted) without the least variation or improvement, notwithstanding the assistance of Groenimeng¹ who is happy for him to have two guineas a month instead of two guineas a song for teaching her. I am apprehensive you will think me too severe and satirical. I cannot help it, for without flattery (my dearest wife is the occasion), my resentments are heightened by the comparison of your two tempers and dispositions. . . .

"I hope at this writing you are safely delivered and of a boy, for we have girls in abundance. I cannot say that I am at all uneasy that our son Ned does not make that progress in the English language which he otherwise would if he had not so many irons in the fire. A master of the dead languages may become master of the living whenever he pleases. His want of ear and awkwardness in dancing I must own gives me pain. There he seems to me to be constitutionally deficient and I would have nothing spared to make him a tolerable proficient in that art."

From the next port of call, the Cape of Good Hope, Clive wrote again. "At the Brasils I bought a parcell of topasses and amethysts rough and smooth amounting to between £200 and £300, which I now send you by Captain Collins of the *Weymouth*. I would have you make up a necklace, earrings, buckles, etc. of the best of them for yourself. The rest I intend for my sisters and friends. Mrs. Fairfield hath desired me to give her a letter of introduction. If she should press

¹ One of the musicians.

me again I must comply. However she is a lady with whom I would not have you very intimate bar civilities such as returning visits will be sufficient."

He also sent home some wine for distribution among friends. Six dozen bottles were intended for Lord Powis, whose daughter Clive's son Ned was destined to marry, and whose title the descendants of Clive were to assume in preference to their own.

Transferring an Empire

I

CLIVE devoted a great deal of thought during the voyage to the work that awaited him in Bengal. He came equipped with adequate power to destroy and build anew. He came resolved to replace rapacity by capacity. Instructions, he knew, had already been sent by the directors that "all persons in the Company's service should execute covenants, restraining them from accepting directly or indirectly, from the Indian princes, any grants of lands, rents, or territorial dominion, or any present whatever, exceeding the value of four thousand rupees (£400), without the consent of the Court of Directors". It was Clive's resolve that these covenants should be signed and observed. He also intended to stop that unscrupulous indulgence in private trade that had reduced Bengal to its present plight.

"See what an Augean Stable there is to be cleansed," he wrote from Madras to Sullivan's successor, Rous, in London. "The confusion we behold, what does it arise from? Rapacity and luxury; the unreasonable desire of many to acquire in an instant, what only a few can or ought to possess. Every man would be rich without the merits of long service, and from this incessant competition undoubtedly springs that disorder to which we must apply a remedy, or be undone, for it is not only malignant but contagious. The new covenants (though I do not entirely approve of their present shape) will make a beginning: many of the civil servants will probably resign their employments. The Court of Directors must supply the Settlement with young men more moderate, or less eager in their pursuit of wealth, and we may perhaps be reduced to the necessity of drawing some senior servants from other Settlements. . . . The evils, civil and military, are enormous, but they *shall* be rooted out. Whatever odium may be thrown upon me by the malice or disappointment of individuals I am resolved to act for the advantage of the Company in every respect."

Clive also aspired to realize the dream he had hugged to his ambitious heart ever since he had revealed it in his enthusiastic, persuasive letter to Pitt six years before. He wanted Britain to lay the foundations

of Empire in India by taking over the three vast provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. But since Pitt was not yet able to effect this, Clive proposed to assume control in the name of the trading corporation he served. The Nawab would remain, a gorgeous shadow with an innocuous title; but the wealth, the revenues, the power of governance, the sole military control would be gathered within his own eager hands, a Governor ruling in the name of the Company. The throneless Emperor, Shah Alum, whom Clive had befriended when as a rebellious Crown Prince he had embarked on a profitless invasion of Bengal, urged us again and again to take these provinces from the Nawab. The Emperor was in need of money. The Nawabs had been remiss in their payments. It was not his concern whether this was due to our repeated, extortionate demands. He merely sought a steady income in return for a magnificent slice of Empire.

"We have at last arrived," Clive told Rous, "at that critical conjuncture which I have long foreseen, I mean that conjuncture which renders it necessary for us to determine whether we can or shall take the whole to ourselves. Meer Jaffier is dead, and his natural son is a minor, but I do not know whether he is yet declared successor. Suja Dowla¹ is beat out of his dominions; we are in possession of them, and it is scarcely a hyperbole to say that the whole Moghul Empire is in our hands. The inhabitants of the country, we know by long experience, have no attachment to any Nabob whatever; their troops are neither disciplined, nor commanded, nor paid as ours are. Can it then be doubted that a large army of Europeans would effectively preserve to us the sovereignty, as I may call it, not only by keeping in awe the ambition of any country prince, but by rendering us so truly formidable that no French, Dutch or any other enemy could ever dare to molest us. . . . If riches and stability are the objects of the Company, this is the method, the only method, we now have for attaining and securing them."

By the same ship Clive sent a brief but urgent note to his agent, ordering the sale of all investments and the borrowing of as much money as Clive's credit could raise, for the purchase of East India stock 'without loss of a minute'. Was it Clive's object to secure increased voting power and so checkmate Sullivan who was already striving to oust Rous from the chair? Or was it, as Clive's enemies declared, later, a plot to profit by the great rise in stock that would follow his annexation of Bengal?

¹The Nawab of Oudh.

2

When Clive arrived in Calcutta, a youth of nineteen, dull-eyed and perfumed, the outcome of a royal indiscretion with a careless prostitute, sat upon the throne of Bengal. He bore the resounding title of Najim-ud-Dowlah.

Eager to acquire all the money they could, the Council preferred not to await Clive's coming, but rushed this worthless son of Jaffar to the throne and extracted from him £140,000 for the privilege. Their consciences they salved by not yet signing the covenants that enjoined them not to accept monetary gifts.

Vansittart was no longer in Calcutta. Although Clive had recommended him for the office which he filled with such disastrous inefficiency, he resented the censure implied by Clive's return. Thereafter Vansittart was Clive's bitterest enemy. He hurried home to support Sullivan in his relentless war upon one whose many kindnesses deserved better of both these foes.

The others on the Council were no less resentful because they remained. For two days Clive surveyed the situation. He locked himself up with the Council minutes of the preceding months; then he faced his critics and laid before them his stern plan of action.

There was a murmur among the councillors. John Johnstone, more rapacious and more daring than the rest, rose excited. A young man, lean, rugged, son of a Dumfries baronet and grandson of Lord Elibank, Johnstone had at the age of twenty-three commanded Clive's artillery at Plassey with singular skill. He had seen Clive send home shiploads of gold and diamonds and felt that his own share of the reward had been disproportionate and insignificant. It had taken him all the intervening years to amass his indifferent fortune, and now Clive's fingers were about to close upon it in the name of the Company. Young Johnstone demanded arrogantly an exact definition of Clive's extraordinary powers. With narrowed eyes and pursed lips Clive glared at him. There was anger also in the other's gaze. In a booming voice, his fist rocking the table, Clive declared: "I will not suffer anyone to enter into the least discussion about the meaning of these powers. The Committee¹ are absolutely determined to be the sole and only judges." The echoes died. There was a tense silence, through which Clive's glances flashed, defiant. He noticed that the faces around

¹His Select Committee of four.

him were "long and pale, and not one of the Council uttered another syllable".

Clive next turned to the evaded covenants. Contemptible quibbles were advanced as arguments, but Clive was in no mood for explanations. He offered them the alternatives of sign or resign. They signed—councillors, merchants, every servant of the Company.

They were cowed; but Johnstone brooded in silence, plotting his revenge. He had obtained £27,000 from the elevation of Najim-ud-Dowlah, and his brother, also on the Council, nearly £6,000. Afraid of Clive's coming and the not yet signed covenants, they had insisted on cash; the Nawab's Government had to resort to usurers to provide the money. Clive ordered that these sums should be surrendered to the Company; but Johnstone, roused, defied Clive's scowl and threw in his teeth the bad example he had set in blazing the trail to plunder. "With regard to presents in general," Johnstone declared, "we have the approved example of the President, Lord Clive himself, for our guide, who, though the Nabob's father's princely bounty on his coming to the government had made his fortune easy, and the Company's welfare his only motive for staying in India, yet acknowledges having made use of the influence of Jugget Seit to apply for a *jaghire*, which, though amounting to £30,000 per annum, was not thought improper by him to accept of, even in the circumstances of distress he then represents the Nabob to have been in—his life twice saved from his troops mutinying for their arrears only by the awe of our arms, and large balances then due to the Company, which were not all paid till after the revolution, 1760."

The duel had begun, a duel that Johnstone's wealthy brothers and influential connections were to convert into a feud destined to dog Clive to the grave.

With his wonted warmth and imperiousness Clive faced his accusers. "As to the recrimination," he said sternly, "of my having formerly received a present from Meer Jaffier which Mr. Johnstone would establish as a precedent to be followed by everybody, he is not ignorant that it was given to me in a military capacity only, as a reward for real services rendered to the Nabob at a very dangerous crisis; nor was that reward ever stipulated, required, or expected by me, or with my knowledge. Be it also remembered, that what I received in consequence of the battle of Plassey, was the only present I ever did receive, although I remained, during the space of nearly three years afterwards, President of the Council and at the head of a

victorious army. Let the impartial world determine whether those who have succeeded me with inferior pretensions, and even in inferior stations, have conducted themselves with equal propriety or moderation. It is unnecessary for me to dwell longer upon the subject of my own conduct, having long ago published every particular relating to it, and having long ago had the satisfaction of seeing it approved by my employers. If all Mr. Johnstone's transactions will bear the test as well as mine, he will no doubt receive as honourable testimonials of public approbation as I did."

None the less, it was felt by those whom Clive restrained, that he was denying them an opportunity from which he had himself not hesitated to profit abundantly. The directors now ranged themselves behind Clive in emphatic and gratified support. "We are satisfied," they wrote, "you have had the real interests of the Company constantly in your view in all your researches into the general corruption and rapacity of our servants, with the spirit and disinterestedness which do you honour and merit our approbation."

News of Clive's severity sped across the provinces. Men in our scattered factories trembled. Belliars, the Company's chief agent at Patna, finding the stain of corruption upon his hands drew his sword and sought a swifter retribution. His mangled form was buried with honour in the agency garden.

Johnstone and others resigned and returned home, where the directors, urged by Clive, started an action for the surrender of the money accepted in defiance of the covenants; but the proceedings were abandoned. Weak counsels prevailed.

3

The annexation of Bengal next claimed Clive's attention. That the Emperor of India was a captive in Allahabad in the camp of Carnac, now a General and a member of Clive's Select Committee, was of advantage. That the Emperor had cause to be grateful to Clive for a past favour and had repeatedly urged the very course that Clive was about to adopt, made it all the easier. Clive hastened to Allahabad to effect the transaction, but called at Murshidabad on the way to divest Najim-ud-Dowlah of the powers which the Emperor was to transfer. The opinion Clive had formed of the new Nawab during their brief meeting in Calcutta was wholly unfavourable. It was obvious that the

youth was quite unfit to rule. His thoughts strayed sensuously to women. Upon his worthless favourites he squandered the vast revenues of Bengal. If Clive had any lingering qualm about appropriating the resources of these provinces, he had none when he beheld the incontinent youth dandling bejewelled dancing-girls on his emaciated knees.

The state finances were already under strict English supervision. To Mir Jaffar Clive's recent predecessors had assigned the wily Nuncomar as Diwan; but replaced him by Mohammed Reza Khan when they elevated Najim-ud-Dowlah. Clive preferred to establish a triumvirate. He joined to the Moslem Reza Khan, two Hindus—Roy Dullub, who had served both Suraj-ud-Dowlah and Mir Jaffar in the capacity of chief minister; and the head of the banking house of Seit. Even the semblance of power that remained with the Nawab, Clive tore from him now. He was put on the list of civil pensions. The lavish allowance of £500,000 a year was assigned him. His Highness was pleased. He had no longer to apportion the revenues between governmental needs and personal desires.

The boy looked up, his heavily-lidded eyes misted with sensuous craving. "Thank God!" he breathed, "I shall now have as many dancing-girls as I please." But his expectations were not gratified for long. Less than a year later, a few hours after Clive's return visit, the young Nawab died. Mohammed Reza, who was with him at the time, was suspected of murder; others, in whispers, accused Clive, but it is difficult to see what advantages were to be gained by the dissipated young ruler's death. A still younger son of Mir Jaffar, Syeff-ud-Dowlah, was now raised to the nominal throne, and, since his immaturity did not need an equal self-indulgence, the English allowance was considerably reduced.

Clive moved on. Overland travelling was slow and fatiguing. Distances were great; roads few. Express messengers used camels. Princes travelled on elephants; their women in ox waggons. The rivers provided the pleasantest form of transport. In a handsome barge, luxuriously equipped, Clive was rowed by bare-bodied blacks, their shoulders glistening in the sun as they sped along the wide, muddy, and often turbulent rivers of Bengal, past drowsing villages, through dense jungles in which tigers prowled, and beside the flat spreading fields of paddy, to the monotony of which the tall temple roofs alone offered relief. For a fortnight Clive drifted along the Ganges to Benares, which was old before Christianity was born. In

this picturesque relic of Hindu Rome, over whose 1,400 temples the mosque of the Moghul invader reared its impertinent domes, Carnac received Clive with a guard of honour. Along the dark, winding streets came the cortège of the Nawab of Oudh to offer his homage and to learn from Clive the fate of his conquered lands.

It was not Clive's ambition to extend the frontiers. Bengal, he felt, should be consolidated before we embarked upon further acquisitions. Money was of more service to us than Oudh. So, with condescending grace, he handed it back to its cringing and perfidious ruler in return for £600,000, as well as two vast districts which we wished to present to the homeless Emperor and the undertaking to act as a friendly buffer between us and the aggressive hosts of Afghan and Mahratta, who despite the slaughter suffered at Panipat in 1761 were still very numerous, predatory and formidable.

Clive's quest of the imperial blessing on what he had already transferred from the Nawab to the East India Company was no more than an elaborate tribute to tradition. The Grand Moghul was without a capital, without a throne and without power. In Delhi another ruled in his place. Yet it was necessary that in the eyes of the Oriental world there should be parchmented sanctions in melodious Persian for what had been wrested from an indifferent Nawab.

Escorted by Carnac and the grateful Shuja-ud-Dowlah of Oudh, Clive hastened thence to Allahabad and unfolded his designs to the Emperor. His Majesty was in no position to dispute any terms we suggested. His joy may be imagined when, instead of being subjected to exactions and humiliations, he was given lands and promised an annual tribute of £325,000 a year in exchange for a few worthless words scribbled on a piece of paper. The Moghul pretensions to all Hindustan had long been little more than a farce; few Nawabs who had undertaken to remit annual contributions to the imperial exchequer still fulfilled their commitments. Emperors had to accept whatever the Nawabs cared to offer or face the precarious issue of a settlement upon the field of battle. But Shah Alum knew that the English Company would fulfil what it undertook. Year after year he would receive this vast tribute in gold, while the English enjoyed a right that they alone could enforce—to collect the revenues of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. They would have the state departments to pay, a Nawab to pension, an army to equip, and the surplus, estimated by Clive at an annual two millions sterling, for distribution among the fortunate shareholders of the East India Company. Apart from being himself the

greatest shareholder, Clive sought in no way to benefit personally from this transaction.

On the 12th of August, 1765, lacking the massive ancestral throne, made of solid gold and ablaze with diamonds, rubies and emeralds, the Emperor sat on a hastily draped arm-chair, placed upon an English dining-table in Clive's tent. Before the assembled officers and his exiled courtiers the imperial proclamation was read, conferring the Diwani of Bengal 'as a free gift' upon the East India Company "from generation to generation, for ever and ever".

Clive approached the dining-table. His Majesty stooped and handed him the deed of transfer. Thus was the foundation ceremoniously laid for our Empire in India. Nearly a hundred years later, on the sepoys mutinying against our rule, the East India Company was shorn of its 'for ever and ever' right. The English Government entered into possession. Queen Victoria became Empress of India and ruled from London in place of the Grand but decadent Moghuls.

4

To the lapping of the Ganges as it bore his barge back to Calcutta, Clive, gazing at the approaching ghats of Benares, with its elbowing shrines and the spiral smoke of the funeral pyres, wrote to his wife of what had been accomplished at Allahabad.

"I have been seven hundred miles up the country," he said, "in the midil of the rainy season. His Majesty the Great Moghul and the Prime Vizier¹ and myself have been very great together. Matters are settled to the mutual satisfaction of all parties by a firm and I hope lasting peace, so that tranquility is once more restored to these much ravaged and desolated provinces. It would amaze you to hear what diamonds, rubies and gold mohurs have been offered to Lady Clive because she has not signed covenants. However I have refused anything and have supported my dignity and kept up my integrity in the midil of ten thousand temptations. This will not, however, prevent my sending my wife some valuable presents which I cannot avoid receiving, being *nagarane*² and presented in a public manner. It will indeed rest with the directors whether I shall pay for them, as I am determined to

¹The Nawab of Oudh.

²Or *Nuzzer*, a ceremonial or votive offering that cannot be refused without giving offence.

receive nothing, not even of the most trifling nature, without giving them particulars. . . .

"Philpot is descending the river at a great rate towards Calcutta that there may be no time lost in dispatching the *Admiral Stevens*, who will carry home to the Company the most important advices they ever received, and if what I have already done and propose to do doth not convince the proprietors of the disinterestedness as well as the integrity of my principles and of my resolution to exert my abilities to the utmost in defence of their property, which has been very much sported with of late by men of as bad hearts as heads, I shall disdain in future throwing away one thought more on so ungrateful a society.

"I am as happy as a man at such a distance from his wife and family can well be. I have the testimony of good conscience to support me in the most arduous task that ever was undertaken, no less than a total reformation in every branch of the civil and military departments. Never was such a scene of anarchy and confusion, bribery, corruption and extortion seen or heard of as has been exhibited in the Bengal dominions for this year past especially."

A few days later he communicated the news to his father. "With regard to myself," he wrote, "I have not benefited or added to my fortune one farthing, nor shall I; though I might by this time have received 500,000 £ sterling. What trifling emoluments I cannot avoid receiving shall be bestowed on Maskelyne, Ingham, and Strachey, as a reward for their services and constant attention upon my person."

With an elaborate flourish he indicated their own exaltation to the directors at East India House: "You are now become the sovereigns of a rich and potent kingdom; your success is beheld with jealousy by the other European nations in India."

Orme, the historian, was not forgotten. Clive wrote: "I have wrote so many letters and gone through such a scene of public business, that I cannot attempt describing to you any part of our proceedings in this part of the world. Scrafton, Walsh, and Colonel Smith will furnish you with abundant matter of surprise and astonishment. Let it suffice to say, that fortune seems determined to accompany me to the last; every object, every sanguine wish, is upon the point of being completely fulfilled, and I am arrived at the pinnacle of all I covet, by affirming the Company shall, in spite of all envy, malice, faction, and resentment, acknowledge they are become the most opulent Company in the world by the battle of Plassey; and Sir Hannibal Hotpot shall acknowledge the same.

"I am preparing plans in abundance for you. You shall have very exact charts of Bengal, Bahar and Orissa, and of the Moghul Empire as far as Delhi at least. A map of the Ganges likewise, and all other rivers of consequence."

Towards the official instrument of our elation, the helpless Emperor, fortune was less considerate. Eager yet afraid to return to Delhi, he wielded a harmless sceptre from the bolstered dignity we provided at Allahabad. Here amid the alternate splendour in imperial robes and the diversion of brick-laying in the palace grounds, he sighed endlessly for the might-have-been and listened to the whispers of adventurers on what still might be. He allowed himself in time to be lured from this security by a Mahratta chief, who hoped to extract concessions from a grateful Moghul reinstated upon Timurlane's throne. But it proved a rash venture, for, not many years after his return to it, his beloved Delhi was invaded by a brutal Pathan, Ghulam Khadir, who dragged His Majesty from the throne and blinded him with a dagger, so that Shah Alum should not see again the treasure that, despite his honest denials, it was believed he had hidden from the conqueror.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Dual Mutiny

I

His acquisitions for the Company already surpassed ten thousandfold anything Clive had ever acquired for himself. But he was to accomplish still more for his masters. In expiation of his sin of opulence, committed in accordance with the approved traditions of the service, Clive was resolved not to spare his health or his purse. He profited neither from gifts nor from trade, and even plunged deep into his own pockets to defray expenses. He was indifferent to the resentments he roused, contemptuous of the enemies who swarmed yelping and snarling at his heels. His desire was to display his disinterestedness and, in displaying it, he won an enhanced claim to greatness.

From Allahabad he returned avid for reform. He would brook no questions. The defiant would be ruthlessly put down. Already Sykes had received a hint of his intentions. "The behaviour of Messrs Leycester and Gray," wrote Clive, "is so ungrateful as well as boyish and ridiculous that I am determined henceforth to harbour in my breast not the least compassion for such hardened sinners, and if upon my return I continue in the same opinion, which I am in at present, Mr. Gray shall go to pot."

Both the civil and the military services were in need of correction. Five years of ill-example and flaccid control had borne a swarm of evils that it was Clive's purpose to exterminate. Merchants who had come to bargain in the bazaars for muslins and spices had suddenly been transformed into administrators. A continent had passed into our control. The fate of congested millions in a thousand towns and villages lay in the lap of junior merchants and writers whom Clive was about to instruct in their new responsibilities.

The imperial firman handed across the draped dining-table altered nothing that was visible. A Nawab still flitted about the palaces and pleasure gardens of Murshidabad. Native magistrates still dispensed justice. Indians policed the village streets. Even the revenues were still collected by the same customs men and tax officials, who still imposed a thousand unsanctioned taxes so that there might be a margin to trim

off for themselves. The inherited evils of native rule still flourished; nor could they be corrected yet. Clive's concern was with the reformation of his own people, so that they, or their successors, by their own example and industry, might effect reforms in the subordinated natives.

Individual trade, permitted as a source of profit to our underpaid merchants, had, he knew, to be suppressed. He had recommended this course to the directors at home, and had himself set the example by undertaking not to engage in it. But the compensating increase of wage, suggested a hundred and fifty years before by Sir Thomas Roe, who had come to India as Ambassador for James the First, had not yet been sanctioned. Men were expected to live in exile and endanger their health for what was no more than a mere pittance.

The directors sent out orders for an instant cessation of all trade in "articles produced and consumed in the country"; then, relenting, for they had many relatives in the East whose profit at the expense of the Indian was not a matter of grave concern, the directors relaxed this order, suggesting that it should be held over "until a more equitable and satisfactory plan could be formed and adopted".

Clive took this second letter out with him. Appreciative of the need for replacing the denied trading privilege, since members of Council got no more than £200 a year and the cost of living was as high as £3,000, he devised, during the voyage out, a scheme for the transfer of private trade from individuals to a syndicate, so that it should be under official supervision and control. To all senior members of the services, both civil and military, he allotted shares in accordance with their office or rank. He also protected the natives from the fangs of avarice. Fixed prices, well below the prevailing rate, were established for the sale of salt, so "it was not probable," Clive declared, "that any grievance should fall on the poor, and the plan was settled for one year only that we might have an early opportunity of completing afterwards what was originally intended as an experiment". The East India Company itself was made the greatest beneficiary. A share of 35 per cent, calculated to yield £120,000 a year, was allotted to it, and raised at the end of the experimental year to a percentage of 50. Clive's own holding yielded £17,500 a year, but he distributed this to his personal staff—his secretary Strachey, his brother-in-law Edmund Maskelyne, and his physician Dr. Ingham.

"That you may assert with confidence the justice of my cause," he wrote to Verlest, a member of his Select Committee, "I do declare by

the God who made me, it is my absolute determination to refuse every present of consequence, and that I will not return to England with one rupee more than what arises from my *jaghir*. My profits arising from salt, shall be divided among those friends who have endangered their lives and constitutions in attending me. The congratulatory *nazzars*, etc., shall be set opposite to my extraordinary expenses; and, if aught remains, it shall go to Poplar or some other hospital”.

2

These recompensing endeavours neither gratified nor placated the merchants. The syndicate's profits, though large, fell far short of the abundant haul of private enterprise that Clive had checked. Resentment was heightened when Clive extended his reforms by discarding the inefficient, trimming the Council to a workable size, and banning councillors from taking charge of factories.

Sumner, who was bullied in Clive's absence by resentful councillors, was severely rebuked for his docility. “To see you,” wrote Clive, “so change your opinion from an opposition of a few debates in Council by gentlemen who are self-interested and who by their conduct have exposed themselves to such a severe censure . . . is to me most surprising.” With fearlessness, with vigour, Clive went on with his reforms. The massacre at Patna had removed most of the senior members of the service; the rest had returned home rich or angry. Clive found, as he described to the directors, “the business of the Secretary's department committed to a youth of three years' standing in your service; the employment of Accomptant is now discharged by a writer still lower in the list of your servants; the important trusts of Military Storekeeper, Naval Storekeeper, and Storekeeper of the Works were bestowed, when last vacant, upon writers; and a writer held the post of Paymaster to the Army at a period when near twenty lacks of rupees (£200,000) had been deposited for months together in his hands”. Native clerks were doing most of the departmental work for lazy and indifferent masters; and as a result “your most secret concerns were publicly known in the bazar. It is therefore with the utmost regret we think it incumbent on us to declare that in the whole list of your junior merchants there are not more than three or four gentlemen whom we could possibly recommend to higher stations at present.”

It was when Clive arranged for fresh blood to be brought from

Madras that the storm of gathering resentment burst. The gentlemen of Bengal conferred together and entered into a solemn pact. They conspired that Clive should be treated with scorn. They decided to decline all invitations from Government House. All contact with Clive was forbidden. He was lowered to the contemptible degree of an outcast. His Select Committee was subjected to a similar slight; while the newcomers from Madras were to be met with open contempt. It was a muscular non-co-operation from which the slightest deviation would bring down an equal degree of stigma on the delinquent.

"The young gentlemen of the settlement," Clive wrote to the directors at home, "had set themselves for judges of the propriety of our conduct and the degree of their own merit; each would think himself qualified to transact your weighty affairs in Council, at an age when the laws of his country adjudge him unfit to manage his own concerns to the extent of forty shillings. They have not only set their hands to the memorial of complaint, but entered into associations unbecoming at their years and destructive of that subordination without which no Government can stand.

"In a word, the members are totally to separate themselves from the head, decorum and union are to be set at defiance, and it becomes a fair struggle whether we or the young gentlemen shall in future guide the helm of government. Look at their names, examine their standing, inquire into their services, and reflect upon the age of four-fifths of the subscribers to this bill of grievance, who now support the association, and you will be equally surprised with us at the presumptuous intemperance of youth and convinced that a stop of three or four years in the course of promotion is indispensibly necessary, if you would have your Council composed of men of experience and discretion."

Clive was adamant. In defiance of their resentment and their pact, he imported the requisite men from Madras and, by the exercise of vigour and resolution, suppressed the revolt. But the victory was hard won.

"The public business," he confessed to his wife, "is become a burthen to me and if anything endangers my constitution it will be my close application to the desk. I am no longer walking about the room talking politics or dictating Persian letters to Nabob's Rajah, etc. I am no longer making preparation for campaigns and fighting. My whole time is taken up in introducing economy and subordination among the civil servants, in reforming most notorious abuses, and sometimes, when I am dared and compelled to it, in detecting frauds and bringing

to shame individuals. In short I will pronounce Calcutta to be one of the most wicked places in the universe. Corruption, licentiousness, and a want of principle seem to have possessed the minds of all the civil servants. By frequent bad examples, they are grown callous, rapacious and luxurious beyond conception, and the incapacity and iniquity of some and the youth of others here obliged us to call from Madrass four gentlemen to our assistance. . . . With their assistance I expect to bring this settlement into some order, although the gentlemen here all mutiny'd upon their being sent for. However, they shall be brought to reason and ruled with a rod of iron untill I see a reformation in their principle and manners. . . .

"In short I have undertaken the most disagreeable and odious task which my honour obliges me to go through with. I am become the slave of the Company and the detestation of individuals, and my constitution cannot bear it long if I am not relieved by the Madrass gentlemen."

3

But a far more disconcerting task awaited him, a task so charged with such grave consequences that for years Governors and Councils had quailed before it.

Through well-intentioned yet reckless generosity when Mir Jaffar was raised to regal dignity by the triumph of our arms at Plassey, every British officer was granted a supplementary allowance, which, so long as it did not come out of its own resources, the East India Company was perfectly content they should receive.

But upon the elevation of Mir Cossim our rapacious councillors, ever careful to overshadow their own plunder by a more generous stuffing of their masters' pockets with booty, extorted in addition from the new Nawab the revenues of three districts for the payment of our troops. Though this measure relieved Leadenhall Street of their entire military costs in Bengal, the directors, ever actuated by parsimony, declined to continue the payments of the supplementary allowance, the *double batta* as it was called, which now appeared to come out of their own pockets. Orders were instantly despatched to Calcutta, but our councillors, hardened by now against directorial command, merely consigned the orders to the bulging pigeon-holes. In any case there was not one among them who could defy the army and endanger its support.

Clive recognized that the cessation of this allowance would entail untold hardships, especially on the junior officers. So his attention was in the first instance directed to lowering their cost of living. He arranged that stores should be supplied them at moderate prices. He drew to the attention of the directors "that until the charges incurred on account of servants, horses, and the necessary equipage of the field in this climate are diminished by some public regulations, the allowance of a subaltern will scarcely maintain him in the station of a gentleman".

Clive had humanity enough to recognize their difficulties and reduce their hardships. The remedy, he knew, lay in a betterment of their miserly wage. But the Company was not disposed to loosen its purse strings, despite its abundant profits, augmented now by the entire revenue of a State more wealthy, more extensive, more prosperous than almost any in Europe.

Clive had admitted the senior officers to the benefits of his trading syndicate. Their profits were large, though the number affected was infinitesimal. He had applied Mir Jaffar's legacy to the care of the disabled, the widowed, and the orphaned. It was his duty now, however, to enforce the scorned commands of his employers. The special allowance was accordingly abolished by the order of the Governor from the 1st of January, 1766.

The officers were furious. Divided now into three brigades, stationed at Monghyr, at Patna and at Allahabad, they communicated with each other in secret and contrived a mutiny. The hour was opportune. Sixty thousand Mahrattas were thundering towards our frontier. Without the army Clive would be helpless.

Two hundred English officers conspired to send in their resignations on the same day. Merchants in Calcutta who had already come under Clive's masterful heel, forwarded large subscriptions to keep them constant in their purpose.

Clive learnt of all this, but he neither surrendered nor faltered. His indomitable spirit rose defiant. "I must see the soldiers' bayonets at my throat," he said, "before I can be induced to give way."

He found in his suite one or two officers on whom he could rely. On trustworthy civilians he conferred commissions. From Madras he brought all officers and cadets who could be spared. He ordered the commanding officers of all three brigades to arrest the principal mutineers and despatch them to Calcutta. "The ringleaders of this affair must suffer the severest punishment that martial law can inflict,

else there is an end of discipline in the army and of authority in the East India Company over all their servants."

Clive then set out to interview the disaffected. Weaker counsels urged him to stay, as there was a plot against his life. They pointed out that officers who could go so far would not hesitate at contriving his death. But Clive brushed them aside with the remark: "The officers are Englishmen, not assassins."

Clive knew, however, that in an emergency he could count on the loyalty of the sepoy and he was resolved, if it became necessary, to employ black men to shoot down the rebellious whites.

At Monghyr the sepoy had to be used. The officers had infected the troops, who were on the verge of mutiny when two battalions of sepoy rushed forward and seized the guns. With loaded muskets and fixed bayonets the sepoy then disarmed the white men. Clive now addressed the mutineers, reminding them that he was himself a soldier. He told them of his fund, of which many had not heard before. The officers he sent under escort to Calcutta.

The most critical was the revolt on the frontier, within sound almost of the approaching Mahrattas. Sepoy dashed a hundred and four miles to Allahabad in fifty-four hours and seized the officers, all but four of whom were kept under arrest.

The mutiny was quelled. Clive had won. In his triumph he was generous to the defeated. Those who desired were allowed to withdraw their resignations. But towards the ringleaders he showed uncompromising severity. They were tried by court-martial and cashiered. Even Sir Robert Fletcher, commanding the brigade at Monghyr, found to have known of the conspiracy without betraying it, was dismissed the service.

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Price

I

AMID the anxieties of office, the battles of reform, and the strain of quelling rebellions, Clive lived and entertained with a splendour more becoming to a Moghul Emperor than to the Governor of a settlement, alien to that country, which, but a few years before, had to ask politely for favours from an autocratic Nawab. In that settlement which at his whim the Nawab had destroyed, driving the white men out towards the sea, Clive impressed and delighted the multitude with spectacular contests between tiger and buffalo, between camel and camel, between elephant and rhinoceros, usurping the imperial glories of a now decadent Delhi. In the grounds of the ambitious fort that was rising at his command, Clive staged a fight in which a timid rhinoceros shirked its duel with an elephant. The larger brute, wrathful at this reluctance, imagined in its restricted reasoning that somehow the spectators were to blame; for it charged those nearest the arena and trampled them down cruelly, killing six. Two days later, in order to appease the cheated multitude, Clive ordered an elephant fight on a more accessible common. It was a fierce encounter. The *mahouts*, who in a premonitory dejection had taken farewell of their wives and children, were thrown off and killed. Then the elephants closed with each other, using heads, trunks and tusks as weapons. At intervals each fled from the other's trumpeting pursuit. But they were driven back to the engagement, until they were so intricately involved that fireworks had to be let off under their tails to separate them. It was a cruel sport in an age ill-aware of cruelty. It was cock-fighting and bear-baiting magnified to imperial proportions. It was the sport of the beaux of Europe enacted by the beasts of Moghuls.

But behind his mask of severity and this display of splendour, slowly Clive's vitality was being sapped. The strain proved too great. At intervals he took refuge in a country residence he had at Dum Dum, five miles from Calcutta. The place had once been a stronghold of robbers, but Clive had the grounds laid out in pretty walks and shrubberies. There he tried to forget the stress of office and freed his

lungs of Calcutta's fetid air. In town during his previous administration Clive had lived next door to Omichand, in a house which once belonged to Eyre, who perished in the Black Hole. Vansittart abandoned Clive's residence and converted into the home of the Governor the imposing house of William Frankland, great-grandson of Cromwell's favourite daughter Frances and son of a former Governor of Calcutta. The ancestral courage must have run thin in his veins, for at the approach of Suraj-ud-Dowlah, Frankland saved himself by pretending to escort some women to a boat. Clive conducted his second term of governorship from the new Council House, which stood where the palatial Government House stands now. It was furnished with magnificence. Costly tapestries adorned the walls. The carpets lay thick and silent. The service was of rich plate that, on Clive's departure, was purchased by the Company for the use of his successors. But amid all this lavishment and luxury he was oppressed by a terrible sense of his loneliness. He sighed for his wife and children. Constantly he sent her precious tokens of his regard—a large transparent diamond ring costing eleven thousand rupees, a ruby ring set with diamonds, rubies and pearls for which he paid 42,000 Arcot rupees, eleven bundles of muslins, two boxes filled with bottles containing attar of roses, and "an abundance of curiosities, viz., a hookoo, a gold bird, a deer no bigger than a cat, etc., etc., a chest full of shawls, pictures, swords and many other curiosities; also one pipe of Madeira and fifteen tons of Brazil wood for furniture for our houses in Berkeley Square and in the country.

"There come upon this ship likewise a very small horse and a much smaller mare. The horse is very pretty and dances or capers incomparably. Whether he will be worth the Prince of Wales accepting I know not. However we may have a Lilliputian breed, you being of that breed yourself."

He enclosed a letter for his son Ned, now twelve and at Eton:

My dear and only Son,

I have received your letter, the style of which is pure and the grammar correct, if it be your own inditing. You have laid the foundation of that knowledge which alone can make you the gentleman and distinguish you from the herd of your fellow-creatures.

Attend diligently to your studies and to the advice of your tutor, but above all follow the instructions of your mother. Let her excellent example be your guide, and you will render yourself truly worthy of that great

fortune which Providence seems to have designed for you. I am, my dear Son, your father and your friend,

Clive.

2

In little more than a year the strain wore him down. He had accomplished more than has ever been accomplished in India in so brief a time. The courage he had displayed in the field attended him in the Council-room, and his statesmanship equalled in quality and achievement the generalship that had crowned his earlier years with glory. What he had won with the sword he consolidated with the pen. Few soldiers qualified to rank with Napoleon have been qualified also to rank with Pitt. But Clive had spent himself. His health declined. The old melancholy returned. He broke down. He became a nervous wreck. He gave way to hysterical weeping. For days he was out of his mind.

"It grieved me beyond measure," wrote Carnac to Lady Clive, "to see a person endued with such extraordinary firmness so oppressed in his spirits as to exceed any degree of hysterics I was ever witness to. I was more shocked as I had never seen him so before, but Mr. Ingham informs me he had a like attack, or rather worse, in England, and he, who from his long and close attendance upon his lordship must be well acquainted with his constitution, has never judged him to be in any danger. It was thought proper to move my lord to Barasut, where we keep him clear of business, and from the change of air with the help of the bark the bile is wholly thrown out of his blood."

Clive had vindicated his honour, but at a price.

The Company had benefited abundantly: the services had been purged, their finances greatly increased, their dominion extended, their foreign rivals driven out of range of any competition. In their gratitude they were overwhelming, but with praise was a liberal admixture of disheartening criticism. They condemned Clive's trading syndicate and insisted on its instant dissolution, without even deigning to suggest an alternative source of recompense for their servants. Their objection was mainly to the monopoly established in salt. Yet Clive, far from instituting this, had merely diverted to our use a right that had been enjoyed by the old Nawabs for generations, a monopoly that in fact continued to yield the British Government a useful revenue for more than a century afterwards.

The price Clive paid was not in health alone. In actual cash he was out of pocket £5,816, as is shown by accounts, kept through a lifetime, of every penny he received and spent. But he paid most dearly in the enmities he roused. He had come to India to still the tongue of criticism at home; but a hundred new tongues were set stirring, eager to shout aloud every whisper of evil against him and to uncover the most sordid secrets. Every frustrated merchant, every baulked adventurer hurried home to fashion a new whip with which to scourge him. They said he had caused the murder of the young Najim-ud-Dowlah. They accused him of lecherous designs upon every maiden, white and black. They said he employed doctors as his procurers. These whispers were blazoned in print, for every foe armed himself with a printing press. But the evidence of sexual excesses is scant and unconvincing. We are asked to accept most fantastic letters of wooing. We are told he approached women of 'spotless fame' with blunt notes left carelessly upon their toilet tables. We are told also that innocence and virtue admonished him for attempting to sully the untainted and directed him to the prostitute. Whatever passions Clive may have indulged, and he was not without his failings, it would be charitable not to lay against a husband whose devotion was so apparent and sincere, accusations that are at best but ill-defined.

These slanders were unpalatable. But his enemies were pickling a far stouter rod for his chastisement.

3

On the 16th of January, 1767, Clive walked feebly into the Calcutta Council chamber and fell into his chair. He handed the Secretary a letter and directed him to read it. It was Clive's resignation and farewell, for he had been told by his physician that he had "no prospect of recovering health or even of preserving life but by an immediate embarkation for my native country". He advised his successors to establish safeguards against corruption, for he feared that with his departure it would return; and he warned them not to strive after increasing the revenues "especially where it can only be effected by oppressing the landholders and tenants".

"The people of this country," he observed, "have little or no idea of a divided power; they imagine that all authority is vested in one man. The Governor of Bengal should always be looked upon by

them in this light, so far as is consistent with the honour of the Committee and the Council. In every vacant season, therefore, I think it expedient that he take a tour up the country in the quality of a supervisor-general. Frauds and oppressions of every sort being by this means laid open to his view, will in a great measure be prevented, and the natives will preserve a just opinion of the importance and dignity of our President, upon whose character and conduct much of the prosperity of the Company's affairs in Bengal must ever depend!"

Ever afterwards that excellent advice served as a guide to our Governors in India.

The farewells were soon over. An adequate tribute to his great achievement was paid by the Council. On the eve of his embarkation an urgent despatch from England begged him to stay a further year in the service of the Company. "There is no doubt, my Lord, but the general voice of the proprietors, indeed we may say of every man who wishes well to his country, will be to join in our request that your lordship will continue another year in India. We are very sensible of the sacrifice we ask your lordship to make . . . after the great service you have rendered the Company and the difficulties you have passed through in accomplishing them, under circumstances in which your own example has been the principal means of restraining the general rapaciousness and corruption, which had brought our affairs so near to the brink of ruin. These services, my Lord, deserved more than verbal acknowledgments; and we have no doubt that the proprietors will concur with us in opinion, that some solid and permanent retribution, adequate to your great merits, should crown your lordship's labours and success."

But Clive's health would not permit him to stay. His original plan of travelling overland across Arabia and Suez had to be abandoned. He sailed at the end of January, Carnac accompanying him with a large private fortune which was to be employed in entering Parliament and in marrying one of the prettiest women in England, Elizabeth Rivett, the eighteen-year-old daughter of the Member for Derby.

4

Clive returned to a distracted England. The King displayed symptoms of insanity. Pitt, now the Earl of Chatham, soon after becoming Prime Minister was stricken by a mysterious malady, not unlike

Clive's, which also brought on intermittent madness. He had already withdrawn to Bath and was quite incapable of conducting governmental business. The conquest of Canada, following upon the triumph of Wolfe, had removed anxiety from our colonists in America, and provided them with the leisure for revolt. They had already flared up over the Stamp Act; and the fresh taxation imposed by the Home Government on tea, glass, paints and paper, though nominal, served only to incense them. The harvest in England had been poor. The country was in the acutest distress. The hungry directed attention to their plight by rioting. Mills were wrecked. Ricks were set on fire.

Behind the scenes, invention was silently giving birth to the machine age that is our heritage. Steam had already been harnessed. Watt, now barely thirty, was slowly perfecting the engine. Plants were being evolved for mass production.

After an absence of two years Clive found England upon the threshold of a new era.

CHAPTER XXXV

Enemies

I

HE arrived early in July, 1767. The grateful shareholders of the East India Company, elated at their accession of wealth, had already, while he was on the high seas, voted him an extension of his *jaghir* by a further ten years. The directors crowded round to congratulate and thank him; and ordered a statue of Clive, larger than life-size, to be set up in their offices in Leadenhall Street. The young King, temporarily repaired in mind, welcomed him at a private audience. Surprisingly, his Majesty had always nursed a deep admiration for Clive; for ordinarily George the Third was intolerant of great men. Undowered with intelligence, stinted of education, lacking in refinement, overburdened by pettiness, he liked men about him who by their insignificance would transform his mediocrity into an impressive royalty; and was encouraged by the inability of an immature democracy to restrain entirely his unfortunate ambitions. The King rejoiced at Clive's return and at the gifts brought back for him and the Queen: "two diamond drops worth twelve thousand pounds for the Queen, a scimitar, dagger and other matters, covered with brilliants for the King, and worth twenty-four thousand more."¹ His Majesty asked Clive to advise him on Indian affairs, "with a promise of his countenance and protection", beamed Clive, "in everything I might attempt for the good of the nation and the Company". No doubt His Majesty saw in Clive a great deal of his own unfulfilled self; for Clive had been absolute in his despotism in Bengal, while George wrestled desperately against the constitutional restraints wound about him by his ministers.

Clive was expectant of new honours, but the ministers in whose gift they were, though they angled for Clive's support, did not gain it. His admiration for Chatham made him loyal to that ailing Prime Minister: Clive was confident that he would soon return to office restored in health and vigour. He had been in constant touch with Chatham throughout his recent absence in India, for the faithful Walsh kept dashing to Bath to snatch a half-hour's talk and to urge what Clive never tired of urging, that the sovereignty of India should

¹Horace Walpole.

be transferred to the Crown. Clive was also in close touch with Grenville, Chatham's brother-in-law, who until a year or two before had himself been Prime Minister. Slowly Chatham was converted to Clive's scheme. Already he had written to the directors (the Chairman of the Company informed Clive) that "the Crown claims a right to all the Company's acquisitions, possessions and revenues that have been obtained by conquest, which the Cabinet Council, with Lord Chatham at their head, say is the case with respect to everything we have got from the King, the Nabobs or other princes of the country for some years past, both at Bengal and Madras".

Clive was concerned more with the foundation of an empire than with the petty politics of a trading corporation. No longer in their service, he felt he had no further need to manipulate the votes of the Company. It was his ambition neither to capture the chair nor to sit on the directorate. He turned instead to Parliament, of which he had continued to be a Member since his election in 1761. He got in touch with Grenville within a week of his homecoming, hopeful of playing a part on the political stage. His hopes ran high, but they were doomed to disappointment. Chatham never returned to power and Grenville was not another Chatham. He had his distinguished kinsman's ability, but lacked his greatness. His blunder in foisting the Stamp Act on an unwilling America led in time to his permanent association with the loss of those colonies. He never regained office, but flattered Clive into sustaining a profitless loyalty.

Clive, however, was not yet ready for the rigours of political life. The festive strain of homecoming, following upon a convalescent voyage, drove him to Bath for the waters. In the winter he left the grey mists of England in quest of the sun. Before setting out he despatched a parcel with this letter to the directors at East India House: "Sometime before I left Bengal the Nabob of Arcot sent me a letter accompanied with a diamond which he desired my acceptance for Lady Clive. As it was inconsistent with the agreement I entered into with the Company when I embarked for India, I returned it to the Nabob by the first opportunity, but imagining that he has sent it by the *Campden*, I send a box which possibly contains it to you, Sir, for the disposal of the directors, conceiving Lady Clive has no pretension to it."

He crossed the Channel with his wife and his staff of secretaries, aides-de-camp, and doctors, travelling through France, where, despite his relentless enmity towards their countrymen in India, the people welcomed him with warmth and showered him with tributes. Near

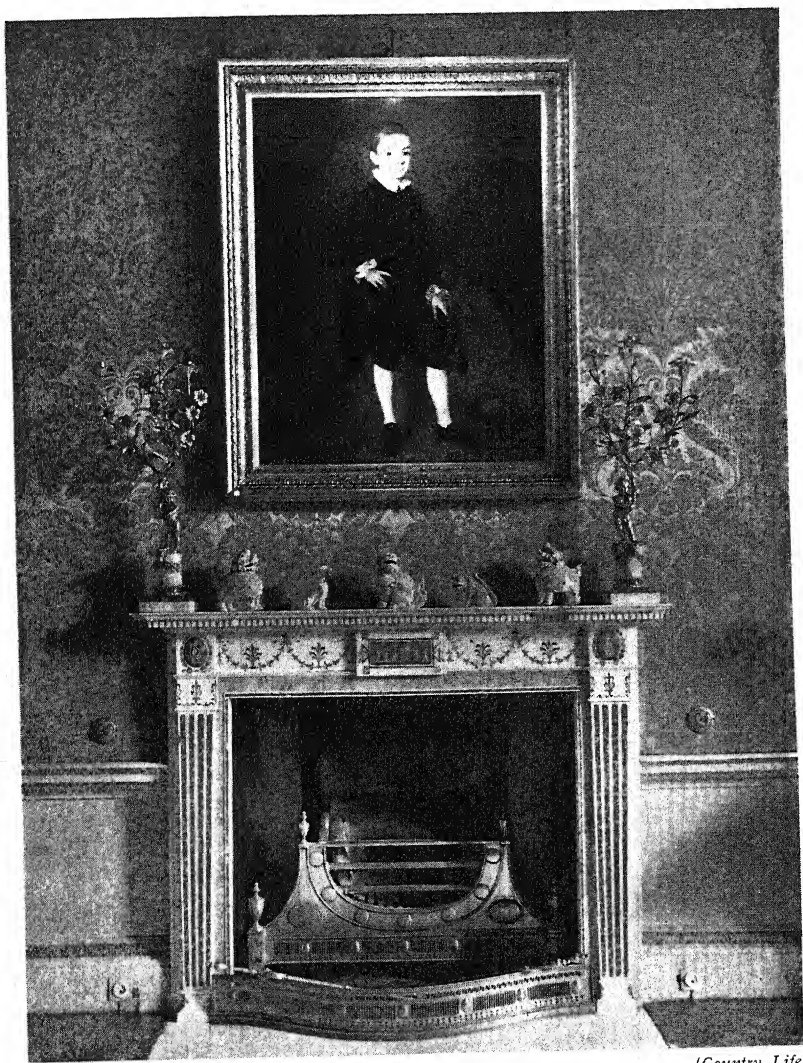
Paris he was greeted by Bussy, who, had Suraj-ud-Dowlah's plans not gone awry, would have met Clive some years earlier in Bengal under less happy conditions.

Having bought half a dozen new palaces before leaving England, Clive employed his tour in equipping them with heedless extravagance. Costly Gobelin tapestries were bought for his home at Walcot; several beautiful French and Italian pictures for his house in Berkeley Square; porcelain from St. Cloud for the mansion rising at Claremont in Surrey amid the thousand acres newly purchased from the Duchess of Newcastle and laid out at great cost by Capability Brown; for Styche, extravagantly reconstructed by the designer of Somerset House, he purchased velvet and rich silks from Lyons. Clive had also bought Lord Chatham's house in Bath, with all its furniture. Right round the town of Bishop's Castle in Shropshire was a ring of Clive's possessions. And his agents were busy buying up still more property, not so much for investment and ostentation as for the right of returning Members to Parliament. Already Clive could count on returning seven members without opposition.

While he was on the Continent a general election agitated the country. Clive did not trouble to return. He held his seat at Shrewsbury, where his influence was paramount, and returned besides the following relatives and friends—Richard, William and George Clive; John Walsh, his wife's kinsman and his confidential agent; Henry Strachey, now married to Lady Clive's cousin, Mrs. Latham; and Edmund Maskelyne, his wife's brother. Carnac was also elected. The House was full of gentlemen from India. Vansittart sat with Sullivan, plotting Clive's downfall. His brother Arthur Vansittart was also in the House. With them were two brothers of the Johnstone Clive had driven out of Bengal, and Sir Robert Fletcher, embittered and unforgiving. Eyre Coote was there too; Hector Munro, Victor of Buxar; Thomas Rumbold, who had been with Clive at Plassey; Pigot, his associate in the early adventure with the polygars and now adorned, like Clive, with an Irish peerage; Francis Sykes, of Clive's Select Committee; and Luke Scrafton, who had escorted Omichand out of Murshidabad.

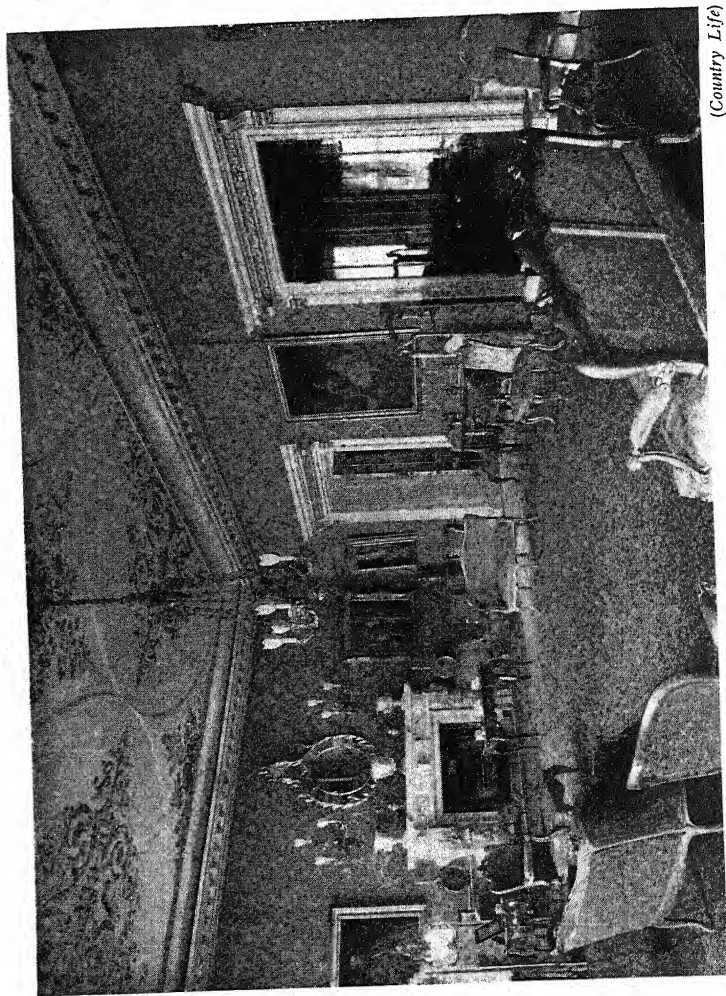
2

Clive returned from France in the autumn of 1768. He had been urged to stay abroad until his full vigour was restored, but he was



(Country Life)

An attractive Adam mantelpiece in Clive's magnificent house in Berkeley Square, London. The portrait is of Clive's son and heir Ned, who later became the Earl of Powis.



(Country Life)

The drawing-room in Clive's house in Berkeley Square, London.

restless for action and refused to extend life with wide spans of idleness. He knew his enemies were active and that he could no longer continue to ignore them. John Johnstone had spent three strenuous years since his embittered return from Bengal planning the revenge that he was more than ever intent now to exact. Behind him, with fraternal loyalty that is as touching as it is rare, were his six brothers, as bitter in their hate, as virulent in their denunciation. Of these William, by a dexterous union of love and luck, had acquired a double fortune, each staggering in its vastness, from his wife's cousin, the Earl of Bath, and as a gracious tribute promptly substituted for the undistinguished name of Johnstone the prouder cognomen of Pulteney. Around the brothers there rallied all the malcontents from India who had ever merited Clive's censure. They poured out their wealth for his destruction and dragged every friend and relative to their support. The shares of the East India Company passed into their control. The proprietors who had thanked and praised Clive, the directors who had dined him on a turtle at the King's Arms in Cornhill, were driven from power. Clive's enemies had all but captured India House. They were striving ceaselessly also to capture every party in the House of Commons, where Clive had about him only his own supporters and the small band who still stood loyally by Grenville. Eager to win the support of the entire country, this hostile faction relentlessly poured out from a hundred printing presses ignoble pamphlets that carried their malice to the envious and their calumny to the scandal-loving. Newspapers were started for the sole purpose of maligning Clive. This public laundering of moral stains appalled a nation already tired of the entire tribe of Nabobs, as it liked to call the homing Anglo-Indian. Envious of their speedily-won wealth, it was also scornful of their upstart ostentation. It recoiled from their bad livers and their gorgeous liveries, their tawny complexions and their tarnished reputations. It sneered at their taste for spices, their black page boys, their turbaned retainers, their jewelled *hookahs*, their purchase of power by the acquisition of rotten boroughs, and their attempt to set themselves up as the rulers of Britain. His early triumphs now mellowed into the tapestried background, Clive seemed merely the wealthiest, and therefore the vilest, of them all. Whipped up by the charges made against him, Clive's vileness took monstrous shapes in the public imagining. The rabble spoke of him as 'the wicked lord'. Simple country folk tramped miles to gape at one or other of his luxurious residences and to wonder at walls built over-thick 'to keep the devil out'. They were told in whispers of a chest from Murshidabad

that had once been filled with gold, and interpreted his constitutional moroseness as the haunting of a troubled conscience. Among others who came to gape was William Huntingdon, a hideous, lumbering youth, sired by a farmer who disavowed paternity, and fostered by a labourer whose rightful name was Hunt. The youth, fearful of the consequences of a seduction in which he was involved, fled when the tailor's daughter he had betrayed became a mother. He sought to conceal his identity by lengthening his name. He roamed the countryside, cobbling, driving hearses, picking up a living as best as he could. What he heard about Clive drove him to mend his ways. He added S.S. to his name to signify that he was a saved sinner, and preached up and down the country until his admirers built him a chapel in London and furnished him with a carriage and a villa in Cricklewood. How extensive was his salvation may be gauged by his contemptible entanglement with a fervent disciple, Lady Sanderson, widow of the Lord Mayor of London.

That he should be powerless to end their campaign of vilification galled Clive's proud, domineering spirit. He whose whisper had been law in India was in England, despite his wealth, his title and his influence at the boroughs, little more than a cipher. Every scoundrel, whose rancour had been restrained by Clive's sepoys in Bengal, was now free to hurl his bitterness at Clive's helpless head. No longer could Clive call on Justices of the Peace, attentive to his smallest commands, to despatch the slanderers from the country. His only weapons now were theirs. He, too, would have to use the printing press and the newspaper, the vote in Leadenhall Street and in Parliament. But his friends restrained him. They indicated the indignity of the founder of our Indian Empire resorting to the base methods of public abuse. It was with difficulty that his pen was checked from answering the resentful innuendoes of Sir Robert Fletcher. Chafing against this powerlessness, maddened by his detractors, mortified by his unpopularity, Clive listened to the soothing call of the gentle downs around Claremont and the sloping meadows of Walcot. He talked of "retirement from the bustle and noise of a busy, debauched, and half-ruined nation". He ceased to attend the general courts in Leadenhall Street. He wished to forget the directors, who, calling themselves his friends, had shown so many instances of pettiness and envy. From Parliament, Clive realized now, there was little to be gained. His ambitious schemes for Britain and India he dared not trust "to so divided, weak and selfish an administration. If Lord Chatham and Mr. Grenville should appear

once more at the head of affairs (of which there is some prospect) they are the only men, capable, in my opinion, of embracing such ideas, which you know are extensive ones".

But Chatham was still mad, indulging a childish fancy for dressing up every waiter and stable-boy at a wayside inn near Marlborough in his own gorgeous livery to the wonder of the country folk and the amusement of every traveller. Grenville lay stricken with a slow but mortal illness. While Clive leaned against this last tottering hope, his enemies seized all the power that they had been striving to obtain. What they could not secure with money they procured with promises. Demanding in open court that the dividends of the East India Company should be raised from six per cent to ten, they used Clive himself as their lever, by pointing proudly to the vast returns from his annexations. The directors, still professedly Clive's friends, opposed this manoeuvre and by their very resistance earned the greatest unpopularity. The shareholders, resolved on higher dividends, were equally resolved on finding directors who would pay them. The ambitious, Sullivan among them, looked to the Government, at whose head the Duke of Grafton unworthily filled the place but lately surrendered by Chatham. The new Prime Minister was more interested in his hounds and in Newmarket than in affairs of State. A descendant of Charles the Second, he indulged his inherited talent and startled the Queen by flaunting a mistress at the opera. He had been indiscriminating in his choice, for the lady who replaced his neglected wife was a woman of faded charms and loose virtue, a Miss Nancy Parsons, whose infamy was blazed in a blunt couplet:

From fourteen to forty our provident Nan
Has devoted herself to the study of Man.

Horace Walpole regarded Grafton as an apprentice to politics who postponed the affairs of the world "for a whore and a horse-race".

Grafton's chief administrative concern was the shortage of money. The ferment in America over taxation made it impossible to attempt the extortion of any further sums from that quarter. Where else could he turn? The presence of the Nabobs in Parliament, arrayed in their gorgeous silks and velvets, their costly wigs and their jewelled swords, provoked him to wring an annuity from the wealthy East India Company. A Bill was introduced. The Government demanded £400,000 a year from the Company for a term of five years. Clive,

still a considerable shareholder, and intent on the transfer of sovereignty rather than money, opposed the measure strenuously; but, as he himself described it, "with some applause, but all to no purpose". His opposition served only to rouse the hostility of the Ministry, who flung the weight of their influence against him at the next election of the Company's directors. In April, 1769, Sullivan and his party were re-established in power. Clive's enemies were now triumphant. The hour had come for their revenge.

3

Clive's back was no sooner turned than Bengal began to slip back into the vicious grip from which he had wrenched it. Salaries, still inadequate, had to be supplemented, and as the Company would not sanction legitimate means, they were supplemented by defiance.

Warren Hastings, loyal to the pathetic incompetence of Vansittart, had returned home with him on Clive's appointment in 1764. But the intervening years had proved profitless in England. They brought him the friendship of Dr. Johnson but cost him what little wealth, honestly acquired, he had brought back from India. "He is almost literally worth nothing and must return to India or want bread," wrote Sykes to Clive in 1768, adding the plea "that even if your Lordship cannot consistently promote his reappointment in the Company's service, you will at least not give any opposition thereto".

Clive was more generous than might have been expected from one of his uncompromising temper. "Mr. Hastings' connection with Vansittart," he replied, "subjects him to many inconveniences. The opposition given the directors this year prevented my obtaining his return to Bengal in Council. Indeed he is so great a dupe to Vansittart's politics, that I think it would be improper that he should go to Bengal in any station, and I am endeavouring to get him out to Madras, high in Council there, in which I believe I shall succeed."

He did. Bengal was unfortunately deprived of the services of Hastings. Verlest, who had succeeded Clive as Governor, continued at the helm but lacked the vigour to ward off or cope with the disasters that overwhelmed the province. It was soon in a far worse plight than before Clive's vigorous correction.

Mismanagement by our Indian agents, the rapaciousness of our own trader-statesmen, a season or two of lean harvests, a war in the South of India financed from Bengal—and the glittering surplus Clive

had provided dwindled into insignificance. An adventurer named Hyder Ali had captured a Southern throne and was terrorizing his neighbours from the coconut groves of Coromandel to the fisheries of Malabar. He had warred on our protégé, Mahommed Ali, the worthless Nawab of the Carnatic, and had come now to the walls of Madras to dictate peace to the English. In Murshidabad the successor of Najim-ud-Dowlah lolled amid the shadows of pomp that the British had left him—a costly gesture to tradition, for though the allowance had been whittled down, he still cost us £300,000 a year. In a few months the surplus from Bengal that was to be divided among the shareholders vanished completely. In a year the Company found themselves drifting slowly into debt.

Again the strong hand was needed in India, but with Sullivan at the helm in Leadenhall Street, Clive was not likely to be invited; nor was he likely, under any consideration, to accept. Sullivan turned to, of all people, Vansittart, whose invertebrate governance had but lately been followed by Clive's muscular purging.

The proposal was not received with acclamation. Clive's friends pulled all the strings of objection and Sullivan capitulated by appointing a committee. To assist Vansittart, whom he would not abandon, Sullivan appointed Luke Scrafton, and Colonel Forde, whose victories in the Circars had been so ungraciously rewarded. The three, equipped with overriding powers over all others, sailed but never reached India. On the voyage out the ship went down with all on board.

4

A dread of inactivity and of solitude, a craving for power, a desire to prick up his ears at every debate in which the word India was mentioned—or was it a vague premonition of what fate had in store that kept Clive from yielding to that urge for retirement, still persistent, still alluring? The rumble of the enemy's guns being brought into position made it impossible for him to desert his own. As he saw the Johnstones and Sulivans gain in strength and influence, his mind surveyed the range of accusation that they were rearing. Wealth, a crime in every patriot, weighed heavily against him because of its vastness; yet he had broken no covenants in acquiring it, but had walked merely along the path sanctioned by tradition and paved by example. At the first breath of criticism he had readily surrendered more than three-fourths

of his annual income; but the *jaghir* was handed back to him on the salver of gratitude. For what he retained he had paid in advance with the anxiety and peril of Plassey and its vast acquisitions for the Company, with the strain of government and his voluntary return to India, sacrificing health and happiness to earn again what he had already earned before. How could his wealth still be charged against him as a crime?

Had he committed a crime? He had striven to serve his country. He had extended the might of Britain. He had brought her victories when from all sides there had come to her nothing but defeat. He had purged the administration of Bengal. He had augmented the wealth of his masters. In his innermost conscience Clive was aware only that he had done his duty, even more than his duty. He had indeed sacrificed himself to his duty. And he had been thanked and praised and honoured. So whatever wrongs had been committed, and they did not appear to him as wrongs, Clive felt that what had not been obliterated had by these very eulogies been condoned.

Those who have gazed down the vista of centuries know that there is scarce a figure in history against whom detractors cannot raise a tower of evidence that at the mere bleating of exclamatory consciences will fall and crush him. It was so with Clive. He seemed aware of his impending doom; for his moroseness was accentuated, his mind more than ever abandoned to gloom.

"Our wide and extended possessions," he wrote, "are become too great for the mother country, or for our abilities to manage. America is making great strides towards independence; so is Ireland. The East Indies also, I think, cannot remain long to us, if our present constitution be not altered. A Direction for a year only, and that time entirely taken up in securing Directors for the year to come, cannot long maintain that authority which is requisite for the managing and governing such extensive, populous, rich and powerful kingdoms as the East India Company are at present possessed of. So far are our Ministers from thinking of some plan for securing this great and national object, that they think of nothing but the present moment, and of squeezing from the Company every shilling they have to spare, and even more than they can spare, consistent with their present circumstances."

His gloom was deepened when the long illness of Grenville was succeeded by death. Suddenly all the hopes against which he had leaned crumbled. "The dissolution of our valuable friend has shipwrecked all our hopes for the present; and my indisposition hath not

only made me indifferent to the world of politics, but to the world in general." The loyal band who had stood politically beside Grenville speedily fell away, accepting new loyalties, angling for new opportunities. Clive was left alone with only one friend from the wreckage, a small Scottish lawyer, brilliant but without scruple, Alexander Wedderburn, whose galloping ambition raised him to the dignity of Lord High Chancellor, Lord Loughborough and Earl of Rosslyn.

Wedderburn initially strove to gratify a parental wish by practising in Edinburgh but, reproved by the judge, he tore off his gown and strode out of the court, swearing he would never return. Nor did he. He left the same day for London, where the tuition of Quin the actor and Richard Sheridan, father of the dramatist, freed his speech of its Scottishness; the patronage of Lord Bute ushered him into Parliament.

The friendship between the ageing Grenville, autocratic, arbitrary, obstinate, most bitter of all the opponents of Wilkes, and this young lawyer, still in his thirties, was never understandable, and still less so when Wedderburn espoused the cause of Wilkes so warmly in the House that he had to surrender his seat. It was Grenville who had been the target for attack by that squint eyed, scurrilous profligate, John Wilkes, in the famous No. 45 of his *North Briton*. It was Grenville who had instigated all the persecution that followed: Wilkes's imprisonment in the Tower, his expulsion from the House, and his outlawry; converting him thus into a popular idol, the hero of liberty and free speech. Now, expelled three times from the House and three times re-elected for Middlesex, he was championed by rioting mobs, by the Mayor and Aldermen of London, and by Wedderburn. And somehow Grenville's strange regard for Wedderburn made him indifferent to that young Scottish lawyer's impassioned pleas for Wilkes. He ignored the incongruity of a *North Briton* battling for one who had directed his most strenuous efforts at pouring contempt upon all *North Britons*. In his earlier years in London Wedderburn had himself denounced both Wilkes and his publication; but he persuaded Grenville now to believe that it was not Wilkes so much as the constitution that he was upholding. It should never be conceded, he argued, that the House of Commons had any right to exclude a member who, like Wilkes, had been lawfully elected. Grenville even attended a celebration dinner at the Thatched House Tavern on Wedderburn's surrender of his seat; and Clive, who was also present, with superb grace offered to provide a new seat by displacing a brother, William Clive, from Bishop's Castle.

Wedderburn accepted the offer all the more gratefully when he was told that no fetters of patronage would be applied. He was left free to vote as he pleased, to join any party he chose. The bread cast by this friendly impulse upon the waters was destined to bring Clive an abundant return.

After Grenville's death Wedderburn joined Lord North, who was a close friend of Sullivan. This angered Clive, but he did not interfere. Wedderburn in fact strove to detach North from this old alliance and attach him to Clive, with what success will presently be seen.

5

The financial pressure to which the Company was subjected annually by the Government drove it steadily towards insolvency. In 1770 came disaster with one of the worst famines Bengal had ever known. People gnawed at the barks of trees for nourishment. Mothers fed on their dead infants. Children ate their dying parents. Millions perished miserably. The towns, the highways, the fields, the streams, were strewn with dead bodies. Hundreds of villages were left without a single survivor. One-third of Bengal's entire population was wiped out.

The news shocked England. It heightened the nation's anger against all Englishmen who had ever been connected with that country. It was believed that somehow white corruption and greed had brought on the famine. Wild stories were passed round of profiteering in rice by white merchants amid the agony of the hungry and the cry of the dying. "We have another scene coming to light, of a black dye indeed," wrote Horace Walpole. "The groans of India have mounted to heaven, where the *heaven-born* General Lord Clive will certainly be disavowed. Oh, my dear Sir, we have out-done the Spaniard in Peru! They were at least butchers on a religious principle, however diabolical their zeal. We have murdered, deposed, plundered, usurped—nay, what think you of the famine in Bengal, in which three millions perished, being caused by a monopoly of the provisions by the servants of the East India Company? All this is come out, is coming out—unless the gold that inspired these horrors can quash them. Voltaire says, learning, arts and philosophy have softened the manners of mankind: when tigers can read they may possibly grow tame—but man!"

It was absurd to attribute Bengal's absence of rain and intensity of summer to the activities, however discreditable, of the Company's merchants. A few of them may have profited from making a despicable corner in grain, snatching accursed fortunes from the reproachful stomachs of the dying. But Clive could not by any stretch of the imagining be held accountable for this disaster. All his energy, all his zeal, all his reforms, accomplished in ill-health and in defiance of the inclement climate, had been bent towards the purification of the administration, the infusion of a sense of benevolent responsibility in our merchant-statesmen, the eradication of rapacity in both white and black hearts. It was more than three years since he had left the plains of the Ganges. He was now 15,000 miles from the scene of horror. Yet all eyes were narrowed at him in anger, all lips curled at him in loathing and contempt.

Vansittart being dead, Clive no longer objected to Warren Hastings' transfer from Madras to Bengal. With eagerness he himself now urged it, for Clive was aware of Hastings' great merits and knew what had been achieved by him in Madras.

The appointment was made, for Hastings was supported by his own friends, who were Sullivan's, as well as by Clive's; he went from Madras to undertake the governance of Bengal, which was to lead to a dignity that Clive coveted but never attained—the dignity of Governor-General of all India.

In a long letter of advice Clive, urging economy, resolution and courage, warned Hastings that as soon as the Company was no longer able to meet the annual governmental levy of £400,000, there would be a stern calling to account by a discontented nation and a disappointed Ministry. The directors would divert the blow from themselves to their servants abroad, and the consequences would prove ruinous to all involved. It turned out as Clive prophesied.

The thoughts passing through Clive's mind on the fate that strove to overwhelm him, betrayed themselves in this inspiring counsel. "When danger arises," he told Hastings, "every precaution must be made use of, but at the same time you must be prepared to meet and encounter it. This you must do with cheerfulness and confidence, never entertaining a thought of miscarrying, till the misfortune actually happens; and even then you are not to despair, but be constantly contriving and carrying into execution schemes for retrieving affairs; always flattering yourself with an opinion that time and perseverance will get the better of everything."

CHAPTER XXXVI

Clive Replies

I

THE Duke of Grafton had surrendered the Premiership some months before. Pilloried by Junius, opposed by his own Lord Chancellor, outvoted in his Cabinet, he was staggered to encounter severe criticism and even hostility from Chatham, who had emerged from his mental eclipse in buoyant spirits but quite forgetful of his debt to Grafton for gallantly taking the helm during his illness. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord North, son and heir of the Earl of Guildford, was speedily thrust into the vacated leadership by the young King, to whom he bore a remarkable resemblance, which was only explicable by the presence of the noble lord's mother, Lady Lucy Montagu, in the household of the King's dissolute parent, Frederick Prince of Wales. George the Third and North had played together in the same nursery. Both were still in the thirties. Both a great deal younger than Clive.

Wedderburn's gratitude to Clive made him persist in his endeavour to establish a friendship between his Prime Minister and his patron. He even induced North to make the first approaches; but Clive was aloof, indifferent. He remembered that North was a friend of Sullivan's. He remembered also that as Chancellor of the Exchequer North had snatched £400,000 a year from the dwindling finances of the East India Company. Nor did Clive care for the man, with his heavy dewlap that earned him the nickname of 'Blubber', and his large somnolent eyes. Clive doubted the sincerity of the move, of which Wedderburn, with the best will in the world, might have been merely the dupe. With excuses of ill-health, Clive deferred a meeting until he could be more sure of North's attitude.

Sullivan and his supporters, meanwhile, aware of North's advances to Clive and eager for action after their years of eclipse, clutched wildly at every opportunity for revenge. They slighted Wedderburn solely because of his association with Clive. They hurled at Clive a bundle of anonymous letters they had received on his management of the Company's affairs in Bengal, and demanded an answer to the charges. They sought by this manœuvre to promote a wariness in his

ministerial overtures. But they merely roused in Clive that fighting ardour that had been lulled into quiescence by melancholy and ill-health. Clive hurled back a stern, almost contemptuous reply. "You have not been pleased to inform me from whom you received these papers, to what end they were laid before you, what resolution you have come to concerning them, nor for what purpose you expect my observations upon them. I shall, however, observe to you that where the whole of my conduct is stated upon the public records of the Company, you may find a sufficient confutation of the charges which you have transmitted to me, and I cannot but suppose that if any part of my conduct has been injurious to the service, contradictory to my engagements with the Company, or even mysterious to you, four years and a half since my arrival in England would not have elapsed before your duty would have impelled you to call me to account."

This swift, inconclusive duel took place a week or so before the meeting of Parliament. Clive was not surprised to find a reference in the King's Speech to India. Obviously official action of some sort was contemplated. But it amazed Clive to hear the seconder of the Address lay the troubles in India at the door of those who had accumulated fortunes there.

It was a veiled attack. A more direct thrust came a few weeks later from Sullivan, who asked in the House for leave to bring in a Bill "for the better regulation of the affairs of the East India Company, and of their servants in India, and for the due administration of justice in Bengal".

2

This motion was merely the prelude to a well-planned debate, in which Sullivan's friends scattered innuendoes against former Governors and their ill-gotten gains. Clive could not leave this unchallenged. He rose instantly, his dark eyes flashing, his nostrils a-quiver for battle. As on the field, so he was in the council chamber, fearless and eager. He shirked nothing. He bared his past "not only without reluctance, but with alacrity", he declared.

"It is well known that I was called upon, in the year 1764, by a General Court, to undertake the management of the Company's affairs in Bengal when they were in a very critical and dangerous situation. It is well known that my circumstances were independent and affluent. Happy in the sense of my past conduct and services, happy

in my family, happy in everything but my health, which I lost in the Company's service never to be regained. This situation, this happiness, I relinquished at the call of the Company, to go to a far-distant, unhealthy climate to undertake the envious task of reformation. My enemies will suppose that I was actuated by mercenary motives. But this House and my country at large will, I hope, think more liberally. They will conceive that I undertook this expedition from a principle of gratitude, from a point of honour, and from a desire of doing essential service to that Company under whose auspices I had acquired my fortune and my fame."

Recounting the difficulties that confronted him upon his arrival in Bengal, he said: "Three paths were before me. One was strewn with abundance of fair advantages. I might have put myself at the head of the Government as I found it. I might have encouraged the resolution which the gentlemen had taken, not to execute the new covenants which prohibited the receipt of presents; and although I had executed the covenants myself, I might have contrived to return to England with an immense fortune infamously added to the one before honourably obtained. Such an increase of wealth might not have added to my peace of mind, because all men of honour and sentiment would have justly condemned me.

"Finding my powers thus disputed, I might in despair have given up the commonwealth and have left Bengal without making an effort to save it. Such conduct would have been deemed the effect of folly and cowardice. The third path was intricate. Dangers and difficulties were on every side. But I resolved to pursue it. In short, I was determined to do my duty to the public although I should incur the odium of the whole settlement. The welfare of the Company required a vigorous exertion, and I took the resolution of cleansing the Augean stable.

"It was that conduct which has occasioned the public papers to teem with scurrility and abuse against me, ever since my return to England. It was that conduct which occasioned these charges. But it was that conduct which enables me now, when the day of judgment is come, to look my judges in the face. It was that conduct which enables me now to lay my hand upon my heart and most solemnly to declare to this House, to the gallery and to the whole world at large, that I never, in a single instance, lost sight of what I thought the honour and true interest of my country and the Company; that I was never guilty of any acts of violence or oppression, unless the bringing

offenders to justice could be deemed so; that, as to extortion, such an idea never entered into my mind; that I did not suffer those under me to commit any acts of violence, oppression or extortion; that my influence was never employed for the advantage of any man, contrary to the strictest principles of honour and justice; and that, so far from reaping any benefit myself from the expedition, I returned to England many thousands of pounds out of pocket—a fact of which this House will presently be convinced.”

3

His enemies had been ruthless in their attack. They blamed him for establishing a monopoly in cotton, of which, he told the House, “I know no more than the Pope of Rome”. They even blamed him for accepting the legacy which he had so magnanimously converted into a fund for soldiers broken in war. They argued that the money never was his to convert; but legal opinion, by a strict interpretation of terms, indicated that legacies had not been specifically forbidden. It was a life-line fired not so much to rescue Clive’s honour as to save the fund. That it was necessary to employ it, revealed the lengths to which his enemies were prepared to go.

Warmed by the vigour of his own eloquence, Clive hit out ruthlessly in all directions. For years he had stood in silence before a scornful, sneering world that had poured out its scurrility from over-worked printing presses. Now, it was his turn. He replied with dignity but with force and with a cold, penetrating logic. He hurled his anger at the directors, blaming them for dropping their prosecutions and not punishing the men he had driven out of Bengal. He blamed his successors in Calcutta for converting an exhilarating surplus into a deficit, although—he pointed to the official returns—trade had more than doubled since he had acquired the revenues of Bengal for the Company. He attacked also the successive Governments of Britain for not heeding his advice earlier.

“The Company,” he said, “had acquired an empire more extensive than any kingdom in Europe, France and Russia excepted. They had acquired a revenue of four millions sterling and a trade in proportion. It was natural to suppose that such an object would have merited the most serious attention of the Administration; that in concert with the Court of Directors they would have considered the nature of the

Company's charter and have adopted a plan adequate to such possessions. Did they take it into consideration? No, they did not. They treated it rather as a South Sea Bubble than as anything solid and substantial. They thought of nothing but the present time, regardless of the future. They said, let us get what we can today, let tomorrow take care of itself. They thought of nothing but the immediate division of loaves and fishes. Nay, so anxious were they to lay their hands upon some immediate advantage that they actually went so far as to influence a parcel of temporary proprietors to bully the directors into their terms. It was their duty, Sir, to have called upon the directors for a plan; and if a plan, in consequence, had not been laid before them, it would then have become their duty, with the aid and assistance of Parliament, to have formed one themselves. If the Administration had done their duty we should not now have heard a speech from the Throne, intimating the necessity of Parliamentary interposition to save our possessions in India from impending ruin."

When Clive sat down the House gasped. They were amazed at his rhetoric. Chatham, who had hurried from the upper chamber to the gallery, pronounced it "one of the most finished pieces of eloquence he had ever heard in the House of Commons". But its bluntness estranged a large number. It lost Clive the support of the House.

Sullivan's Bill was introduced. But it was not taken any further; it had served its purpose. Clive's enemies were resolved now to put him on his trial for all he had ever done in India. A young dandified soldier, Colonel John Burgoyne, stood up in the House on the 13th of April, 1772, to demand a Committee of Inquiry.

4

Ill-health, anxiety, public contumely had aged Clive rapidly in the brief years since his return from India. Magnificent beribboned wigs hid the havoc on what little was left of his hair, but his face was marked more heavily than his forty-odd years deserved. There were folds of sleeplessness below his small eyes. His cheeks sagged. The lines on his brow were accentuated by more than earnestness and thought.

With wifely devotion the small attendant figure of Lady Clive was always at his side, undertaking with him the long journeys to their scattered country homes for a constant change of air, to Bath for the waters, to Italy for the winter sunshine. When Parliament was in

session she was with him in town. When he stirred restlessly at night she was out of bed, standing beside him. While the world flung its foul aspersions, while the national wrath, kindled, as it was so easily, by leaflets passed round in taverns and by gossip uttered across the card tables at White's and the Cocoa Tree, Lady Clive, though she wept in private, soothed and caressed him with tenderness and understanding. Her presence was comforting; her voice his solace. Amid the few staunch friends who assembled around him at the week-ends she moved, the presiding spirit, radiating a warmth that strove to counteract the chill, sullen silences of her husband, who was aloof, gloomy, cynical. He was like an outlaw driven to his lair, his muscles bulging, his nostrils alert, his eyes fierce, his sword flashing in the gathering shadows, awaiting the challengers.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A Fight for Honour

I

BURGOYNE was a bastard; but his gentlemanly father gave him a gentlemanly upbringing which he completed by running away with a gentleman's daughter. Years of disgrace and exile followed his elopement with Lady Charlotte Stanley, daughter of the Earl of Derby. The military commission with which his father, Lord Bingley, had equipped him, he had to sell to meet his debts. But in 1760 he returned, handsome, a man of parts and promise, and only thirty. He entered Parliament, led a brigade in Portugal, wrote plays and dabbled in politics. Friendship for Sullivan, envy of Clive's early success and wealth, and a scornful recollection of that Pitt-phrase that had designated Clive a 'Heaven-born General', made Burgoyne, himself unconnected with Indian rivalries, eagerly lead the wolves to their quarry.

He sought a Committee of Inquiry, he explained, to examine conditions in the Indies, so that Members might be enlightened before they were asked to vote on the contemplated Bill. It was a mere stratagem; a ruse adopted to disarm suspicion.

The motion was carried without a division. A committee of thirty-one was appointed; and since Clive could not, with his equipment of Indian knowledge, be excluded, save with glaring malice, both he and his secretary Henry Strachey, who was now also his kinsman, were elected to serve on the committee.

But, at its very first meeting, the committee betrayed its latent purpose by turning itself into an inquisitorial court and thrusting Clive into the dock. Governor Johnstone, one of the many rallying Johnstones to the cause of their young brother, was responsible for this manoeuvre. A coarse, brutal, boisterous seaman, George Johnstone had the good fortune to be appointed Governor of West Florida in his early thirties and the misfortune to kill his captain's clerk, to be court-martialled, and to be involved in innumerable duels, all of his own provoking. While Clive was engaged on the field of Plassey, Governor Johnstone was embroiled in undignified scuffles with the ship's hands. When

Wilkes's paper, the *North Briton*, attributed his gubernatorial appointment to the triumph of his Scottish origin over merit, he returned home with a challenge for the writer. Wormed into Parliament, he shocked that proud assembly, even in that outspoken generation, by his boorishness and his scurrility. His only asset was his skill with his pistol, an asset which no party could employ or value. In 1770 he forced a duel on Lord George Germain. He had repeatedly been bound over to observe the peace. Yet he was chosen now to raise his voice in condemnation of Clive. In a thick Dumfries accent he pronounced that the inquiry would be to little purpose unless it went back to our earliest successes in Bengal and to the dethronement of Suraj-ud-Dowlah. That made Clive the initial victim; it was the only victim they required.

The suggestion was adopted.

The witnesses assembled for this moment were paraded before the committee. Volumes of reports and letters were produced. Clive himself, though on the Committee of Inquiry, was examined and cross-examined at inordinate length. Every action of the past was dragged out and subjected to the worst interpretation. The motives of his most patriotic and courageous impulses were questioned and challenged. The Lord of Plassey was treated, as he complained, no better than a sheep-stealer.

Clive's attitude was one of vindication. He withdrew nothing. He palliated nothing. He offered no excuses. When questioned about the bogus treaty with which he had deceived Omichand, Clive, raising his square chin, said: "I formed the plan for a fictitious treaty. I think it was warrantable in such a case, and would do it again a hundred times." John Cooke, who had been Secretary to the Select Committee in Bengal in 1757, declared in his evidence that Watson knew his name had been forged, but raised no objection.

The vast sums of money he had received from Mir Jaffar, Clive described as just rewards for the great services he had rendered and, at that time, not contrary to the rules of the Company or to his own honour. "Am I not rather," he demanded, his face flushed, "am I not rather deserving of praise for the moderation which marked my proceedings? Consider the situation in which the Victory at Plassey had placed me. A great prince was dependent on my pleasure; an opulent city lay at my mercy; its richest bankers bid against each other for my smiles; I walked through vaults which were thrown open to me alone, piled on either hand with gold and jewels! By God, Mr. Chairman," he exclaimed, "at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation!"

The House rose while the inquiry was proceeding. But Clive's enemies employed the interruption in hurling on an impatient world a hurried report of the evidence and the cross-examination. It served its purpose by inflaming the already distended feelings of the populace against Clive. It did more; it turned a cold searching light upon the East India Company, whose acquisitions had conferred upon it vast powers without popular control. In the hands of a few autocratic directors and their agents lay the fate of millions of Indians. The time had obviously come for drastic reform.

Clive repaired a part of the damage to his prestige by having himself installed a Knight of the Bath during the recess. The honour had been conferred on him some years before, but his appearance at the grand installation and His Majesty's gracious greeting served to indicate that, despite the vilification Clive had to endure, he was still in favour at Court. A few months later, on the death of the Earl of Powis, who was Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire, Clive succeeded in elevating himself to that dignity. It was a difficult manœuvre and demanded both tact and delicacy; but with the aid of Wedderburn it was accomplished. Clive visited the King again to kiss hands on assuming office and found His Majesty very distressed at the persecution to which Clive was being subjected. "The King was very much affected," wrote Clive to Strachey. With His Majesty's encouragement and the Prime Minister's sympathetic support, Clive was invested with a still further dignity a few weeks later—the Lord-Lieutenancy of the County of Montgomery.

The edge was erased from his eclipse by these new honours; and the last shred of suspicion regarding Lord North fell away from Clive's mind. He was ready, even eager, to co-operate with the Prime Minister.

Lord North was in need of his co-operation; for the affairs of the Company had produced a crisis. The vast surplus had disappeared entirely. For months the directors of the East India Company had been dipping into their scanty reserves to keep the services in commission; now even these were exhausted. The banks had come to the rescue by advancing £600,000. But the Company needed far more than any

bank was prepared to advance. An appeal was made to the Government. A million pounds was sought as an initial loan.

Lord North was prepared to consider the appeal, though unlikely to respond to it without preliminary inquiry and administrative control.

He turned to Clive. The two men, the Prime Minister of England and the conqueror of India who was popularly regarded as a felon, were closeted together in a long interview. Clive produced again the scheme that Pitt had deferred for a worthier moment—the control of India from Whitehall instead of Leadenhall Street. North was converted to its merits. With modification, he hoped to adopt it.

In the grey mist of a November afternoon the excited House met. North, in a short, shrewd speech, hinted at a sweeping change in the powers of the Company, and, with a view doubtless to ending Clive's inquisitorial torture, suggested that another Committee—a Committee of Secrecy—should be appointed to examine the affairs of the Company.

Clive's enemies, however, refused to be cheated of their sadistic delights. If the Secret Committee, they argued, were appointed, then the earlier committee must also continue its labours. Although it was now obvious that the earlier committee could serve no purpose other than washing dirty linen, especially Clive's, its existence was continued. North surrendered to the clamour. The East India Company, meanwhile, strove to ward off its doom by setting its own house in order. It appointed a new commission of supervisors to undertake the work that fate had prevented Vansittart, Forde and Scrafton from accomplishing; but the Government intervened. It insisted on not being anticipated. A Bill was introduced by the Secret Committee to restrain the Company, and was denounced by Edmund Burke, playing an unusual role for a reformer.

"Here," said Burke, referring to the earlier inquisitorial body, "is a committee appointed last year; a fair and open committee, which have produced nothing. This was the lawful wife publicly avowed; but finding her barren they have taken a neat little snug one, which they call a Secret Committee, and this is her first-born. Indeed, from the singular expedition of this extraordinary delivery, I am apt to think she was pregnant before wedlock."

These lateral manœuvres served merely to prolong Clive's agony. Months went by. Months of anxious waiting. Months of calumnation. Months of popular derision and scorn, suffered with dignified silence. Months of torture and bodily pain that twisted

and racked him. Months of distressing uncertainty over the outcome of this inquisition. In May, 1773, having borne as much as he could endure, Clive broke out in vehement denunciation. "My situation, Sir," he told the House, "has not been an easy one for these twelve months past; and though my conscience never could accuse me, yet I felt for my friends, who were involved in the same censure as myself. Sir, not a stone has been left unturned where the least probability could arise of discovering something of a criminal nature against me. The two committees, Sir, seem to have bent the whole of their enquiries to the conduct of their humble servant, the Baron of Plassey; and I have been examined by the Select Committee more like a sheep-stealer than a member of this House. I am sure, Sir, if I had any sore places about me they would have been found. They have probed to the bottom. No lenient plasters have been applied to heal; no, Sir, they were all of the blister kind, prepared with Spanish flies and other provocatives. The public records have been ransacked for proofs against me; and the late Deputy Chairman of the India Company, a worthy member of the House, has been very assiduous indeed—so assiduous in my affairs that, really, Sir, it appears he has entirely neglected his own. As the heads upon Temple Bar have tumbled down, and as there appears no probability, for Jacobitism seems at an end—at least there has been great alteration in men's sentiments within these ten years—I would propose, Sir, that my head, by way of pre-eminence, should be put upon the middle pole; and his Majesty having given me these honours, it is proper they should be supported—what think you then of having the late Chairman and Deputy Chairman on each side?"

At this jest of bitterness the House laughed uproariously for several minutes. But Sullivan merely scowled with a terribleness that could be seen across the chamber. He had not yet done his worst. He simmered in fury. The bankruptcy of the Company's exchequer had been bared to the world. Ruin stared them in the face, unless from some source money could be found. Not in loans, for that would prove no more than a palliative. There was Clive's wealth, a veritable Aladdin's cave, acquired while in the service of the Company, while His Majesty's troops were employed on the field of Plassey. Surely by legal contrivance this vast wealth could be seized, confiscated and diverted to the service of the country and the Company.

It was a deep-laid plot. The moment had come to spring it. The Attorney-General, Lord Thurlow, fathered the proposal. Lord North,

the Prime Minister, mindful now only of his old regard for Sullivan, eager to obtain all that the proposal portended, and false to the friendship he had but recently pressed on Clive, signified his approval of the confiscation. Clive was without a friend in the Cabinet, for Wedderburn, the Solicitor-General, had been deliberately excluded when the plot was sprung. It remained now but to lead the lamb to slaughter—to strip Clive of everything, his entire fortune, the luxuries with which he had upholstered his magnificence, even the little comforts to which he had grown accustomed: everything.

4

Again Burgoyne came forward—a soldier to humble and ruin the bravest man of his own calling. He mauled Clive savagely in a ruthless speech introducing this resolution:

“That the Rt. Hon. Robert Lord Clive, Baron of Plassey, in the kingdom of Ireland, in consequence of the powers vested in him in India, had illegally acquired the sum of £234,000 to the dishonour and detriment of the State.”

Clive rose, pale but calm. Friends must have cautioned him on the need for restraint; for his customary vigour was absent. He appeared to be in leash, though the endeavour to break away was at times evident. He little expected, he said, after having all but exhausted his life in the public service and to the financial advantage of the Company, that he would be faced with “transactions of this kind, tending to deprive me not only of my property, and the fortune which I have fairly acquired, but of that which I hold more dear to me—my honour and my reputation. . . . I must beg leave to observe to the House that presents were allowed and received from the earliest time of the Direction. They have continued to be received uninterruptedly for the space of a hundred and fifty years; and men, Sir, who have sat in the Direction themselves have at several times received presents. This the Direction must know, and I am firmly of opinion that in honourable cases presents are not improper to be received.” He referred again to his deception of Omichand, for again it had been brought forward, and said: “The House, I am fully persuaded, will agree with me that, when the very existence of the Company was at stake and the lives of these people so precariously situated and so certain of being destroyed, it was a matter of true policy and of justice to deceive so great a

villain." He read to the House letters he had received from the Directors expressing their appreciation of all he had done, and concluded with these words:

"Sir, I cannot say that I either sit or rest easy when I find by the extensive resolution proposed that all I have in the world is to be confiscated and that no one will henceforward take my security for a shilling. These, Sir, are dreadful apprehensions to remain under and I cannot look upon myself but as a bankrupt—nothing my own and totally unable to give any security while these resolutions are pending. Such, Sir, is the situation I am in. I have not anything left which I can call my own, except my paternal fortune¹ of £500 per annum, which has been in the family for ages past. But upon this I am content to live, and perhaps I shall find more real content of mind and happiness therein, than in the trembling affluence of an unsettled fortune. . . . But to be called after sixteen years have elapsed to account for my conduct in this manner and after an uninterrupted enjoyment of my property, to have been questioned and considered as obtaining it unwarrantably, is hard indeed, and a treatment I should not think the British Senate capable of. But, if it should be the case, I have a conscious innocence within me that tells me my conduct is irreproachable. They may take from me what I have, they may, as they think, make me poor, but I will be happy. I mean not this as my defence, though I have done for the present. My defence will be made at that bar, and before I sit down I have one request to make to the House—that when they come to decide upon my honour they will not forget their own."

5

The debate was adjourned for two days. When it was resumed on the 21st of May, 1773, Burgoyne expanded his original motion by inserting phrases condemning "the evil example" set by Clive "to the servants of the public".

Young Charles James Fox, ostentatious, self-satisfied, over-indulged, dared to raise his voice too in condemnation of Clive. Son of the Fox who had championed Clive in the disastrous election of 1754, which had brought Clive to Parliament only to unseat him, Charles had but lately been at Eton with Clive's son Ned. He rose now to denounce Clive as "the origin of all plunder, the source of all robbery", forgetting

¹His father died in 1771.

that his own father had acquired the barony of Holland and a vast fortune through his unscrupulous raids on public funds. He was unquestionably the most corrupt figure in the most corrupt era of our political history; and the self-righteous son, with a mincing conscience in his young mouth, was fast dissipating that ill-gotten wealth at the gaming tables. Already, before attaining the age of twenty-three, he had squandered £150,000 in this manner; and when it was rumoured that Charles was to be married his father leapt with delight at the thought that for one night at least his son would stay in bed.

Charles's denunciation of Clive was eagerly taken up by an excited throng. All through the night the House shaped and reshaped the motion. All through that night men talked, angrily, persuasively, reproachfully, pleadingly. His Madras friend, Pigot, General Carnac, Rumbold, who had fought with Clive at Plassey, spoke for him, Clive himself said little—just a few words, ending with this feeling phrase: "Take my fortune, but save my honour." Then he left the House.

Night paled. The dawn was glowing faintly, then more confidently, through the eastern windows. Still the House argued. In his luxurious drawing-room in Berkeley Square, Clive sat, his hands hanging over his knees, his head bowed, waiting for the issue. Around him were the tokens of his triumph at Plassey, and he could be pardoned for wondering in his dejection if these evidences of wealth and comfort—the green brocaded walls, the glittering ceiling richly decorated with golden foliage, the large canvas by Paolo Veronese, supported by Salvator Rosas and by Claude Vernets for which he had outbid the King of Poland, the Tintoretto, the massive, ornate marble fireplace and the long, low settees fashioned from the Brazil wood he had sent home—compensated him for all the anguish he was enduring. His mind ranged across all the years he had spent in India. The hot scent of ripe mangoes filled the air as on the night before Plassey. In his nostrils were the *attar* of Nawabs, the stench of the bazaars and of black-bodied hurrying humanity. Beyond the window Berkeley Square revealed itself slowly in the bleak tardy dawn.

In the House Wedderburn fought valiantly for his friend. "For shame!" he said. "What! Is this to be the national gratitude for exploits which have been the pride of Britain, the envy of Europe, and the admiration of the whole world? Upon such odious insinuations are we to raise an envious hand against those laurels which flourish on the brows of men who have done so much? You would now plunder the men to whose bravery, conduct and unparalleled activity

you owe this vast Empire." But for Wedderburn's efforts, the verdict would have been wholly condemnatory. It was decided "that it appears to this House that the Rt. Hon. Robert Lord Clive, Baron of Plassey in the kingdom of Ireland, about the time of the deposition of Suraj-ud-Dowlah and the establishment of Mir Jaffar on the musnud, did obtain and possess himself of two lakhs of rupees as Commander-in-Chief, a further sum of two lakhs and 80,000 rupees as Member of the Select Committee and a further sum of sixteen lakhs or more under the denomination of a private donation, which sums, amounting together to 20 lakhs and 80,000 rupees, were of the value in English money of £234,000." On Wedderburn's insistence this saving clause was, at the last minute, appended—"and that Lord Clive did at the same time render great and meritorious services to his country." The fortune was left undisturbed. The bread cast upon the waters had brought its return.

But the King, informed immediately of the issue, sent Lord North this surprising letter: "I owne I am amazed that private interest could make so many forget what they owe their country, and come to a resolution that seems to approve of Lord Clive's rapine. No one thinks his services greater than I do, but that can never be a reason to commend him in what certainly opened the door to the fortunes we see daily made in that country. I cannot conclude without adding your conduct has been the greatest satisfaction."

The letter was written in the King's own hand at five minutes past eight in the morning.

To Clive, dejected by the preponderating note of condemnation, the saving clause yielded little consolation. But for his friend's efforts—and he rewarded Wedderburn with a vast estate in Mitcham and a cheque for several thousand pounds—Clive knew that he too, like Cortes, like Dupleix, would have stood damned wholly in the sight of his contemporaries.

In the appended words of praise, wrung from a tired House, Voltaire, remembering Lally, La Bourdonnais and Dupleix, found a new and inspiring theme. He expressed a desire to write the history of our conquest of Bengal. Clive was applied to for dates and details. Though the task was big and Voltaire already in his eighties, Voltaire was eager to undertake it. But Clive, broken, dispirited, was indifferent. He wished the past to be forgotten, as he hoped he might himself one day forget it. But it was not easy, and recourse to drugs proved but a transient remedy.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

The Shadow

I

THE humiliation was too much for Clive's imperious spirit. He had always been proud and overbearing. When as a young man an apology had been extracted from him on the order of the Madras Governor, his haughty arrogance rejected the advances of the humiliator and scorned his invitation to dinner with the words: "I was ordered to apologize, not to dine with you." Since then Clive had won an empire, a fortune and a peerage. He felt he had a claim to the gratitude of his nation. Instead, his fame had been dragged through the mire. It would have been less torturing had he been driven in a tumbril through gaping thousands to the gallows at Tyburn, for there would have come an end to the suffering. Now he would have to go on enduring it for as long as memory irritated the sore. The multitude, even the peasantry of his neighbourhood regarded him as a monster. There were ugly whispers when he passed. His children were growing up: Ned was nineteen, the older girls thirteen and eleven; old enough to hear and understand what was being said. It was humiliating, torturing. Drugs could help him to forget, but the world still continued to remember. He was surrounded by unspoken thoughts. Every glance shouted an accusation.

For hours Clive would sit in his arm-chair in a dazed silence. He spoke little now. He rarely turned even to see who was approaching. It was as if he wished to cut himself adrift from the world, to escape from it. Drugs, and more drugs. They were sapping his vitality, destroying that hard constitution that, despite his many severe illnesses, had helped him to defy the rigours of his tropical campaigns.

2

He heard in a daze of North's Regulating Act, whereby the governance of India was subjected to the administrative control of the Government at home. It was the fruition of much that Clive had outlined in his scheme. He heard, too, of the increased troubles in America. He was told that in Boston a mob disguised as Indians had

boarded sailing ships from the East Indies and had flung their load of tea into the harbour as a protest against our taxes. He learned of the King's resolve to punish these 'rebels'. The port of Boston was closed to trade. The entire State of Massachusetts was deprived of the liberties it had enjoyed since the coming of the Pilgrim Fathers. Additional troops were sent to America. "If we take the resolute part," the King declared, "they will undoubtedly be meek. Four regiments will be enough to bring the Americans to their senses."

His Majesty's thoughts turned instantly to Clive, unquestionably the greatest military commander of the age. Though he had condemned Clive's rapine, he still had the highest esteem for Clive's genius, and the hour, he felt, had come to curb the vaulting ambitions of these colonists. Clive, if anyone, could curb them, just as he had curbed the intrigues of the Indians and had overthrown the legions of France. A great many others in the country were also of the same view.

Clive was approached. He was asked to accompany the British forces to America and lead them to victory. But the summons came too late. Clive stared in silence. Drugged, dazed, he hardly grasped the purport of the call. He was no longer capable of responding to it. The country had to seek another leader.

It was ironic that Clive's chief accuser should have been a substitute. Burgoyne—now General John Burgoyne—was sent instead. By his surrender of the entire force under his command on the plains of Saratoga, he provided the turning-point of the war. History is agreed not only that Clive would never have stooped to surrender, but that, with him in command against the Americans, the Fourth of July would not so early have been established as a festival of independence across the Atlantic. Burgoyne was called to account later for his surrender. The humiliation he had made Clive endure he was permitted to sample for himself; but it did not cure him, for upon the homecoming of Warren Hastings he flung himself as ardently into the new attack as he had done into the old. Burgoyne's greatest service to his country was his enrichment of the army with an illegitimate son.

3

November 1774. Beyond the massive small-paned windows, Berkeley Square lies as bleak and as gloomy as his soul. An irritating drizzle drips upon the trees.

An eternity of restless inactivity. An eternity of pain. A future without hope. What else does life hold? Pain! Suffering, both physical and mental. The mounting malignity of his enemies, the raging scorn of the world.

Clive is tired. He has just returned to town from a strenuous general election in which his beloved Ned, his heir, has been returned for Ludlow: a Member of Parliament at twenty. In his own constituency of Shrewsbury, which he has held for thirteen years, Clive, pursued even here, was challenged by William Pulteney, wealthiest of the vindictive Johnstones, determined to persecute him, resolved to unseat him. But Clive has emerged victorious from a fierce encounter. The Johnstones, however, are not disposed to accept the situation. They have petitioned the new House, which is to meet in a week. It seems likely that Clive's protégé, the second Member for the borough, will be unseated.

For some days increased doses of opium have brought Clive little relief. "How miserable is my condition," he wrote to Strachey early that November. "I have a disease which makes life insupportable, but which doctors tell me won't shorten it an hour." He has suffered so since 1752. "I much fear I must be unhappy as long as I live"; he realized that as far back as 1768.

For months sleep eluded him. Friends who have come in for a game of whist, detecting his inability to concentrate, have hastened away with excuses. Tonight Lady Clive is uneasy. She soothes him, she coaxes him, leads him to bed, begs him to eat. His face is haggard. There are lines upon it of excruciating pain.

On the next day, the 22nd of November, he is preparing to leave for Bath, to seek again such relief as the waters may bring. All that morning he has been restless, walking about his room in his nightgown, taking no more nourishment than a dish of tea. At three o'clock his valet informs him that his coach is at the door. Clive goes into the closet to dress. After some minutes there is a thud that echoes through the house; and the valet, rushing in, finds Clive lying dead upon the floor.

The newspapers next day announced that death followed a fit of apoplexy; but a day or two later there appeared a hint that he might have died of an overdose of opium, unwittingly taken. One or two gazettes commented on the undue haste in burial. The body was borne away by night within forty-eight hours and taken to the quaint little church of Moreton Say, near his birthplace at Styche, where it was laid without even a stone to mark it.

Malicious whispers, based perhaps on the talk of servants or spread possibly by his enemies, soon said it was suicide. Some declared that Clive had been found with his throat cut, and history has unwarrantably accepted this. An attorney of Lincoln's Inn, Mr. Robert Pardoe, writing to a friend three days after Clive's death, stated: "I am sorry for the death of Lord Clive, which was sudden. He had taken opium for many years, and finding the disorder in his bowels very painful, he took a double dose against advice, and died in a fit. He had several of those fits before, some friends of mine have seen him seized with them in the Rooms at Bath, so that the little surmise of his dying unnaturally is without foundation. I mention this for fear it should reach the country."

Horace Walpole in a letter declared: "Last night Lord Clive went off suddenly. He had been sent for to town by one of his Indian friends—and he died. You may imagine, Madam, all that is said already. In short people will be forced to die before as many witnesses as an old queen is brought to bed, or the coroner will be sent for." Five days later he wrote: "Lord Clive has died every death in the parish register; at present it is fashionable to believe he cut his throat."

Was it suicide? There was the sting of humiliation under which he was still smarting, though more than a year had passed since his partial vindication in Parliament. His work was over; he may have wondered what else there was to live for, except, of course, for his wife and children, of whom he was inordinately fond. But, far more likely, it was no more than an accident; and the hurried and secret burial merely the desperate desire of the family to elude the prying eye of a gloating public.

Some said that the tortured body was buried 'at four lane ends', as all suicides should be buried; but a century later, workmen restoring the little Shropshire church found the great soldier and empire-builder stretched out under a row of seats.

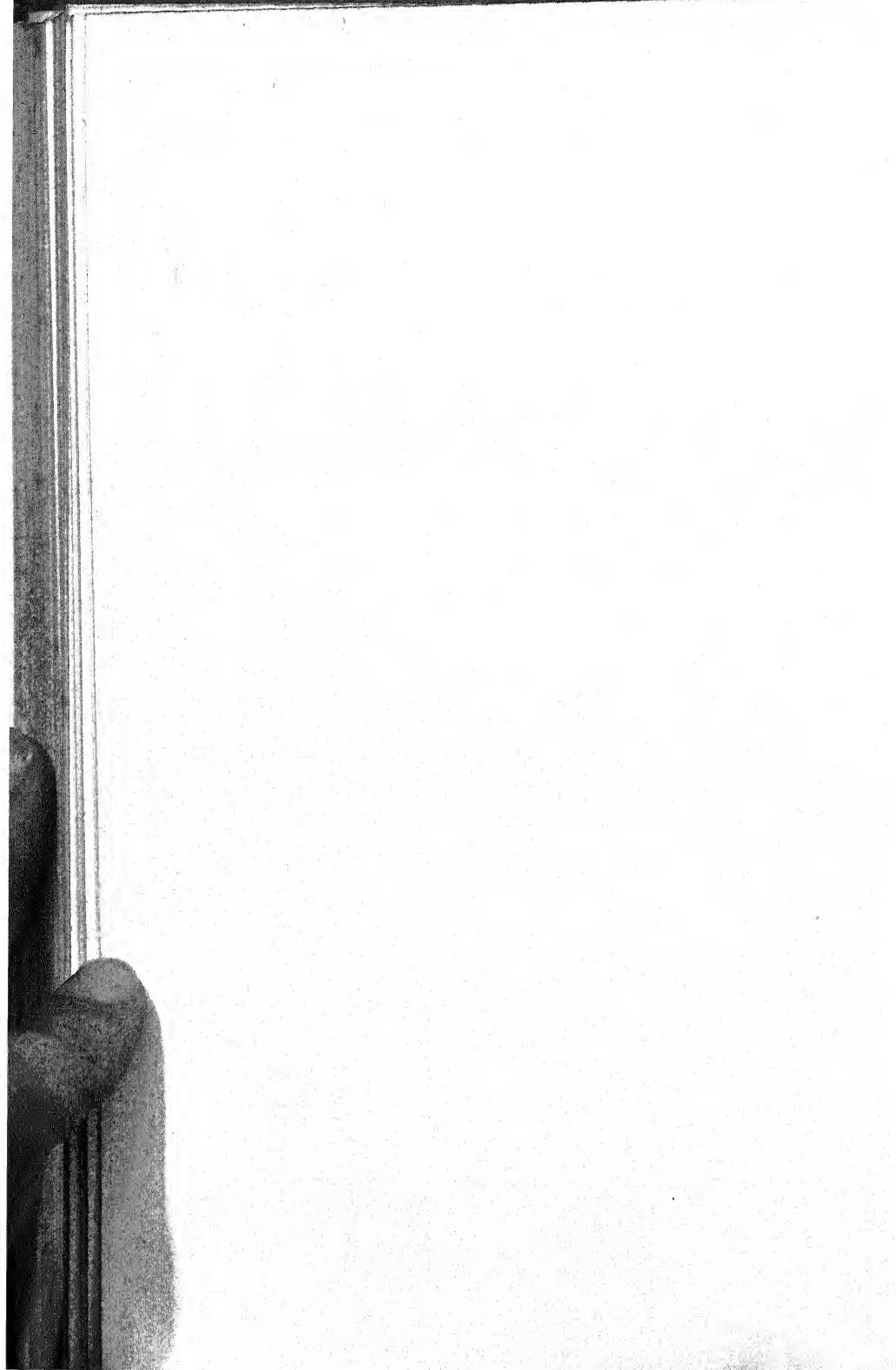
The shadow that lay across his fame even the charity of death did not serve to remove. While the sad procession was on its way to this forgotten church, while the new Lord Clive was hurrying home from Geneva to console his mother, the printing presses were busy with fresh slanders on one who was no longer able to reply. They beat mercilessly upon his shroud. They scattered foul tales of venality and seduction that sought to convert Clive into a monster of history.

4

Thirty years later his beloved Ned, heir of the barony of Plassey, having governed Madras with success, was raised to the dignity of an earldom. Instead of increasing the glory he had inherited from his father, he preferred to conceal it. Through his wife, last of the house of Powis, he laid claim to that lapsed title. Ancient though it was, it had come down with several links missing from the chain of inheritance, and upon it lay the stains of imprisonments, exiles, and confiscations that made it far less illustrious than that which it was brought in to replace. The heir of Plassey became the Earl of Powis. Three years later even the proud family name was surrendered. Ned's son adopted the maternal surname of Herbert.

Clive's widow lived to witness and endure this, for less than half her life had been spent when Clive died. For forty-three years she survived him, living in the shadow that surrounded his name, but never doubting that history would acclaim the services he had rendered his country.

But history was slow. Save for Shrewsbury which honoured him in a hundred years, it was not until our own generation that a single memorial was raised to his name either in his native country or in the vast Empire he founded.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Life of Lord Clive (3 vols.), by Sir John Malcolm; *Lord Clive*, by Col. G. B. Malleon; *The Life of Lord Clive* (2 vols.), by Sir George Forrest; *Life of Lord Clive* (4 vols.), by Charles Caraccioli; *Life of Clive*, by the Rev. G. R. Gleig; *An Address on Clive*, by the Marquis Curzon; *Macaulay's Essays*; *Horace Walpole's Letters*; *British Government in India*, by the Marquis Curzon; *Baron Clive*, by Sir A. J. Arbuthnot; *Clive and the Strachey Family*, by H. E. A. Cotton; *Clive*, by Sir Chas. Wilson; *Louis XV*, by Voltaire; *A Voyage from England to India in the year 1754 and an Historical Narrative*, by Edward Ives; *History of the Military Transactions in Indostan*, by Robert Orme; *An Account of the War in India*, by R. O. Cambridge, with a narrative of the war on the coast of Coromandel by Col. Lawrence; *View of the Rise and Progress and Present State of the English Government in Bengal*, by Henry Verelst; *The History of British India*, by James Mill; *Considerations on Indian Affairs*, by William Bolts; *A Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal from 1760 to 1765*, by Henry Vansittart; *Reign of Shah Aulum*, by W. Francklin; *History of Market Drayton Parish Church*, by T. P. Marshall; *History of the Maharattas* (2 vols.) by J. C. I. Grant Duff; *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656-1688*, by François Bernier; *Sketches of Rulers of India*, by G. D. Oswell; *The Memoirs of Dupleix*; *The Memoirs of Labourdonnais*; *Clive*, by Professor Seely; *Dupleix*, by Col. G. B. Malleon; *Genuine Narrative of the Desperate Deaths in the Black Hole*, by J. Z. Holwell; *Holwell's Indian Tracts*; *Sterne's Eliza*, by Arnold Wright and W. Lutley Sclater; *The Old East Indiamen*, by E. Keble Chatterton; *Rise of The Christian Power in India* (Vol. I), by Major B. D. Basu, I.M.S.; *Seir Mutagherin*, by Seid Gholam Hossein Khan (Vols. II and III); *Early Records of British India*, by J. Talboys Wheeler; *Bengal in 1756-1757*, edited by S. C. Hill; *Echoes from Old Calcutta*, by H. E. Busteed; *The Prime Ministers of Great Britain, 1721 to 1921*, by the Hon. Clive Bigham; *The Eighteenth Century in London*,

by E. Beresford Chancellor; *History of the Rise and Progress of the Bengal Army* (Vol. I), by Capt. Arthur Brome; *Calcutta, Old and New*, by H. E. A. Cotton; *The Correspondence of King George II, 1760-1783* (6 vols.), edited by the Hon. Sir John Fortescue; *Campbell's Lives of the Lord Chancellors; Charles James Fox*, by John Drinkwater; *Dupleix and Clive*, by Henry Dodwell.

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